POLITICS of CHARKHA

J. B. KRIPALANI

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of
CHARKHA

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By The Same Author

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THE LATEST FAD-BASIC EDUCATION, 2nd Edition.

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POLITICS
of
CHARKHA

by

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INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet was written in the middle of 1940 when there was a demand for the starting of the Civil Disobedience movement to assert the nation's right against the war policy that was imposed on the country by British imperialism. The demand was most insistent from those who were then called the radicals and the left-wingers, the Socialist and the Communist. The Working Committee having explained clearly its position vis-a-vis the war in a number of resolutions and having withdrawn its ministries from the provinces was cautiously feeling its way. Gandhiji while not averse to some kind of direct action insisted upon the fulfilment of the Constructive programme as a condition precedent for his initiating and leading the movement.

The pamphlet was written to explain the stand taken by Gandhiji at that time, as against the so-called radicals. It was written to explain the organisational, the political and the revolutionary significance of the charkha, the village industries and the Constructive programme in general. It briefly tries to explain the view-point of Gandhiji regarding the programme and answer the objections raised against it by the Socialists, the Communists and the intellectual radicals. It also tries to examine and analyse what the leftists advocated those days, the revolutionary organisation of labour and the peasantry.

Since the pamphlet was written much water has flown down the bridges. The radical parties have radically modified and even changed their position. Soon Russia was dragged in the war. For the Communists overnight the war ceased to be an imperialist war. It became the 'peoples war' that was to be supported and helped in

every way, whatever the attitude of England and the Allies towards the Indian people and their aspirations for freedom and independence. Russia joined the war while Individual Civil Disobedience was on and most of the Indian Communists were in jails. They made their peace with the Government and when released began vigorously to propagate their new view-point. When the 'Quit India' resolution was passed in the A. I. C. C. meeting at Bombay in August 1942 the Communist members of the committee opposed it and voted against it *enblock* the 1942 movement, forced upon the nation and put down by fire and sword, the Communists sided with the Government as against the people. They denounced the Congress and its leaders. Now that the holy crusade, the 'peoples war' is happily over, the Communists have been trying to adjust their sails to the prevalent political atmosphere. As soon as the Working Committee was out they loudly declared their loyalty to the Congress and protested that they were only against sabotage and violence, which were against the Congress policy, and not against the Congress or its leadership. They joined the Gandhi Jayanti celebrations this year and declared their faith in the charkha and the Constructive programme. After the September meeting of the A. I. C, C., however, their attitude towards the Congress has changed. It is said that several thousands of them have resigned their membership of the Congress. Evidently this refers to primary membership of the Congress. In their propagandist zeal they seem to have forgotten that no resignation from primary membership of the Congress is necessary simply because no such membership exists today. It exists only in the brain of the most factual of Indian political parties, the Indian

Communists. The primary membership of the Congress, as is well known, is annually renewed. It has not been renewed for the last four years. Except in one place, the Tamil Nad, the old registers exist nowhere! The last meeting of the A. I. C. C. therefore decided that there be fresh enrolment of primary members on the strength of which fresh elections, office-bearers and elective Committees will be held by March or April 1946. The A. I. C. C. also suspended the rule of continual membership of three years for office holders. And yet we are told that thousands of members of the Communist Party have resigned from the Congress.

In the present elections the Communists have allied themselves with the Muslim League. They seem to have forgotten some of their basic theses, "the economic interpretation of history" and "religion is every where used as an opiate of the people." They fully approve of the way the Muslim League and its leader use religion to confuse all politico-economic issues and thus postpone the day of Indian liberation. The Indian Communists, as their leaders in the "Fatherland of the proletariat," are more concerned with powers-politics than correct theory or straight practices. With them the philosophical theory of dialectical materialism has degenerated into the most machiavellian opportunitism for the capture of power. Such quick-change politicians, for whom all theory changes with convenient and successful practice, may well be left out of any serious study of political and economic programmes.

The Socialists have changed their old position. They have definitely come nearer to Gandhiji and his philosophy. Their attitude to big centralised industry is greatly modified. They have as a consequence revised their

opinions about decentralised agriculture and industry. They realise the danger to democracy from over centralisation, whether in the political or the economic field. Their faith in war and violence as solvents of present-day distempers of the world is shaken. They appreciate, better especially after the invention of the Atomic Bomb, the value of non-violence and general strike for the redress of political and economic wrongs. They have also come to realise that labour and peasantry can best be organised not on revolutionary lines but upon genuine trade union basis, that is on economic issues. They rightly consider Gandhiji as the greatest revolutionary personality in India. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel is rehabilitated in their political esteem, if not in their affections. They have began to doubt the bases of their old political affiliations. They have not yet lost faith in violence. But they fully believe that the country can best be organised in terms of the Constructive programme placed before the country by Gandhiji. They think that Gandhiji has added new items in his Constructive programme and made it more comprehensive. They have now no objection to it for the organisation of the country. The extension however is more apparent than real. Constructive workers who have been engaged in what are considered the new fields know this fact. Work in the so called new items has always been going on but it was not so organised as in the case of khadi and village industries, Harijan uplift work and Basic education. Any way, if this satisfies the socialist he may have it so. The Kisan Sabhaite too has reviewed his position, He has come to realise that as long as India is not free, Kisan Sabhas must be organised not on revolutionary lines but on economic basis. The fight for freedom, that is the

political side of it, the national struggle against foreign domination, must be guided, directed and controlled by the Congress which represents all the classes, communities and interests in India and works principally for the good of the masses, the labourers and the peasants. There has been such a rapprochement between Gandhiji and non-Communist radicals and left wingers that these words have now lost all their old significance. That they had significance in the Indian political context was stated by the present writer in one of his articles "The Right Wing and the Left" incorporated in his book "The Gandhian Way". All the movements of direct action hava been started by Gandhiji who is not a leftist.

This pamphlet, as I have said, was written in the middle of 1940, but it could not be sent to the press owing to my official preoccupations, the Individual Civil Disobedience movement and then my incarceration for the last three years. After I was released I searched for the remnants of my papers left after the ruin caused by the authorities in my office and my residence at Swaraj Bhawan, from 1942 to 1945. Accidently I found this manuscript, which after re-reading I have decided to send to the press. Except for verbal changes here and there it stands as it did in 1940. In sending it to the press I am conscious that in the changed circumstances it has a very limited practical value. But I feel it has yet some value as an exposition of "The Gandhian Way". It may help a little, some serious student of Gandhiji's philosophy and technique.

SWARAJ BHAVAN,
ALLAHABAD.
10th April, 1946

J. B. KRIPALANI.

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CHAPTER ONE

Politics of Charkha

The question of the political significance and importance of Charkha and Khadi has again come to the forefront owing to Gandhiji's insistence that without their general acceptance by the Nation or at least the Congressmen it would not be possible for him to start civil disobedience movement. One would have thought that discussions through the last 19 years had settled the issue and there would be no doubt in the minds of Congressmen at least about their importance. But nothing seems to be ever finally settled in the present day world.

The political significance of Charkha can only be discussed if its economic value is conceded. If this is not done, the Charkha loses most of its political importance. We shall therefore, in this discussion take for granted the need of charkha in the present day economic life of India.

Misconception

To begin with, it must be clearly understood that Charkha and Khadi do not stand alone. They are part of the scheme of village and cottage industries. They signify decentralisation as against centralised production. This is all. The question of science and the use of mechanical energy does not arise, and is, therefore, irrelevent to the issue. The Charkha

and the loom can be worked by power generated and supplied to a house-holder in his village or cottage. Very often confusion is created by bringing in the question of scientific discoveries and mechanical power as if these can be utilised only in big centralised factories and not in small decentralised units of industry in the village or the home. The confusion is due to the fact that factories have grown in number and size after the use of steam power, which can be conveniently and economically generated and worked only on a large scale. Also steam power cannot be transmitted in small regulated units over wide areas. If only steam power is to be used, increased production must necessarily be centralised in big factories. It must be remembered that centralised production in factories is nothing new. It existed before the invention of steam. Only big factories were not as wide-spread and as big as after the use of steam. The social problems that factories create, of child and woman labour, long hours of work, unhygienic surroundings, low wages and exploitation are also not quite new problems. They are only accentuated by the increase in the size and number of factories. Even steam power would have been helpless in increasing the size and number of factories, were it not for the geographical discoveries, making possible the import of cheap raw materials and creating new markets in distant lands for finished goods.

For critical and scientific study, therefore, the question of big factories must be dissociated from the question of the use of mechanical power. Its use is not solely responsible for the evils of the factory system. Rather, it was the concentration of production leading to the accumulation of wealth and capital in a small class of capitalists owning the machines on one hand, and a class of slaves, the industrial proletariat, on the other, that is responsible

for the present maladjustments. Mechanical energy has been only a powerful facilitating and contributing cause. Today we can use mechanical power, without necessarily multiplying big factories all round or creating a landless industrial proletariat. Much of the present day production can be decentralised without eschewing the use of mechanical power or curtailing output. Rather to think that in the present scientific age there is no escape from centralised production in big factories is to limit the scope of science. It is a scientific or rather an unscientific superstition. The victims of this superstition are those votaries of science whose knowledge of their subject has stopped with steam, even though they use other kinds of energy, every day of their lives. It is an instance of sleep and custom crippling the faculty of scientific thought.

Therefore, the question of village industries must be dissociated from the idea of the use of mechanical power at the disposal of humanity made available by scientific research.

The proper understanding and appraisement of village industries and their place in Indian economy today and in the future, are again clouded by the supposed views of Gandhiji on machinery. However often he may explain but those who want to damn his schemes and outlook on life always take refuge in the supposed fact that he is against all machinery. After all, enmity to mechanical labour-saving devices cannot come from a practical reformer like Gandhiji. It is as if when Gandhiji advocates prohibition, he is against the brandy bottle. The battle is neither moral nor immoral. It is amoral. So are all the mechanical devices. They get moral worth and value by being used or abused by humanity. Man alone lends things their moral signi-

ficance or its contrary. Gandhiji has, therefore, no quarrel with any material object or device. He is, however, convinced that private large scale mechanised factories, instead of making mechanical power the slave of man, have enslaved humanity. He, therefore, denounces these even as he has denounced the liquor bottle. Nevertheless he is sane enough to know that mechanical power and even some large scale centralised and mechanised production in big factories, under the present circumstances of the world, are unavoidable. Centralised industry has therefore, some place in his philosophy of life. For scientific inquiry it is necessary to find the place he assigns to it rather than to confuse the issue, as is often done, by raising the false cry that he is against all mechanical power, modern science and its discoveries, and is, therefore, a revivalist and reactionary, who proposes to turn back the hands of the clock, as if anybody could do that!

If, then, these misconceptions, identification of science and progress with centralised big industry and supposed opposition of Gandhiji to mechanical power and to all scientific knowledge and progress are avoided, the problem of the economic and political significance of the Charkha can be studied in an atmosphere free from prejudice and the raising of irrelevent issues. It can be studied without our minds being clouded as Lord Bacon would say, by the idols of the school.

Economics and Politics

What then is the significance of the Charkha in the life of our nation? That it has some importance at present is not denied by the serious-minded socialist. He holds that cottage industries have a place of their own. We are told that they exist in Soviet Russia. Only the socialist denies to cottage indus-

tries the place that Gandhiji assigns to them today and in a free India in the future. The economist too, admits the need of some subsidiary industry in a poor thickly populated agricultural country like ours, specially when agricultural holdings are so small that they cannot maintain an average village famliy. The economist, however, thinks that in the future when agriculture is mechanised and big industry established there will be very little scope, if at all, for cottage industry. But both the socialist and the economist admit that there is no escape from cottage industry today when we have not captured power and achieved independence.

The reason for this is obvious. Today, more than ever before, industrialisation is not a purely economic problem. It is intimately connected with politics. As a matter of fact there has been no time in modern history when the questions of industry and commerce were not closely linked up with politics. If the mercantile system was based upon political considerations, no less are free-trade and the present-day autarchy based upon similar considerations. Trade restrictions, navigation laws, protective tariffs, have as much politics about them as the absence of such restrictions. We see this illustrated in English history. England once swore by free-trade as an article of faith of liberal and and democratic politics. As soon as the political preconditions, that made free-trade a paying proposition for England disappeared, England abandoned it is an economic theory. In the present age of autarchy it is impossible for a new nation to build up big industry without the absolute control of its own currency, its banking system, its foreign trade and tariff. All these imply not only internal sovereignty but also freedom from external control. A full control of natural resources,

agricultural and mineral, of the country is also essential for industrialisation. In short, without political power and sovereign independence, industrialisation on any large scale and on a permanent basis, is an economic impossibility. While industrialisation depends upon the capture of power, the development of cottage industry is not to the same extent dependent upon politics. It will be objected that the question is one of degree only; but in practical politics the degree question cannot be neglected.

Any extensive and permanent industrialisation, in the present political circumstances of India, being beset with almost insurmountable difficulties, what is the nation to do? Is it to remain helpless till political power is captured and independence achieved? Such a policy, with a starving population, would be economically absurd. Politically too it would be highly dangerous. It would make the nation entirely dependent on other countries. Such dependence will not only harm it materially but also morally and psychologically. Dependence is always degrading except when one is putting forth one's best effort to remove it. One item in this effort, in the present circumstances, must necessarily take the form of providing ourselves locally with as many of our requirements as we can and, to that extent diminishing our reliance on other countries, specially England, that completely dominates the national life. We must increase the scope of our economic swadeshi by all the means in our power and at our disposal. We must make ourselves independent of the foreigner in as many directions as we possibly can. Economic internationalism is a great and noble principle, only when it results in mutually advantageous interchange of commodities. But interchange to be so advantageous must be on basis of equality. The commerce between the weak and the strong

can never be on terms of equality. It can only be on terms of dependence on the side of the weak and domination on the side of the strong. Such intercourse cannot make for strength that is derived from independence and co-operation. Therefore, those who scoff at the effort at economic self-sufficiency underlying the philosophy of village industries under present circumstances in India and of the world, fail to understand the real issue. To preach international collaboration to the weakest when all the strong nations are progressively drawing near to protection and autarchy and using all the political weapons at their command to achieve those ends, is scarcely the way of wisdom. It is to echo the cry of our political and economic opponents. About a couple of decades back the liberal politicians in India prescribed free trade for India on the basis of an economic theory born in the peculiar politico-economic condition of England and which benefitted England alone. The theory of free-trade was considered as many other social and political and economic theories have since been considered, scientific and, therefore, final. Upto his death, Mr. Dinshah Wacha, remained a great advocate of free trade for India irrespective of the policy of other nations and their changed political and economic outlook.

Under the present political circumstances, therefore, the industrial development of India through cottage industries is most natural and beneficial. It is economically advantageous. What economically benefits a nation must be politically sound unless economic advantage is purchased by the exploitation of other countries. Whatever removes the grinding poverty of the Indian masses must strengthen them and the nation. Cottage industry removes unemployment to a greater degree than the present partial and

anaemic industrialization that has to contend with fiscal, financial and foreign policies not controlled in the interest of India. By providing a supplementary occupation to the cultivator, cottage industry lightens his burden and the burden on the land. Any addition to his meagre income means less of poverty, squalor, dirt and disease. It also means greater resistance-power and stamina. The natural consequence of this material advancement is an accession of individual and national strength and self-respect. If properly guided it should mean more wide-spread, practical, and theoretical, general and political education for the masses. One may not believe in the economic interpretation of history, but there can be no doubt that any increase in material prosperity for the masses of our country, living in painful grinding poverty, must mean greater political consciousness and strength. Any way those who subscribe to the economic interpretation of history cannot quarrel with the proposition that increased purchasing power of masses would be politically advantageous.

Organisation

The watchword of present day progress is organisation. As a matter of fact all human progress is the triumph of organisation. Every worker organises. A good worker organises well and a bad worker organises ill. A physical worker organises matter, an intellectual worker organises ideas. Even the literary man, the poet and the artist are all organisers in their respective fields. The reformer is an organiser of men. The difference between a Military General with genius and one without it, often boils down to the capacity to organise men and materials. What is true of the soldier is also true of the politician. An activity, therefore,

that organises the greatest number of men with the least difficulty and expenditure of time and money, must be considered politically good and sound.

Also if there is one quality in which we Indians are deficient as compared to the people of free nations, it is in the capacity to organise. Man to man an average Indian in any activity or walk of life-including the military, is as good as his compeer elsewhere. The difference arises only when group action, entailing co-operation, organisation and discipline, is undertaken. The so-called British conquest of India was merely the conquest of one group of Indians by another for the benefit of the foreigner. The European adventurers, whether the French or the English, supplied the capacity to organise. Some times this organising capacity was requisitioned for the mutual conflicts of the Indian princes. Nowhere is it recorded that in the armies of the French or the English, the Indian soldier fought less bravely than his European comrade. It was recognised that when properly organised and disciplined the Indian soldier gave as good an account of himself as the European soldier, if not better. It is so today. It is the same in other spheres of life. Our social political and economic life apart from the political handicaps imposed by foreign rule, suffer from want of organisation. The capacity to organise, therefore, is the one quality the nation sadly lacks and which it must cultivate, if it is to assert its dignity and achieve its independence. It is the one quality, more than any other, that will enable the country to keep its independence, after it is achieved.

Social Virtues

Organisation means patience, co-operation, unity, solidarity, respect for and obedience to leadership and several other moral qualities. These individual and social qualities must be

cultivated before our nation can achieve independence and successfully compete with other nations. They can best be cultivated by taking up some work which needs and calls for organisational activity and capacity. Organisation may, however, be imposed from above, or may result from the willing understanding between co-operating units of the need for it and the readiness to discharge the necessary obligations. People may be organised by a dictatorship or a democracy. The latter organisation is admittedly morally and politically superior to the former, and in the long run materially so too. Every industry, big or small, centralised or decentralised, affords training in the organisation of mass of men. The difference is, that in big centralised industry, as in dictatorship, organisation is imposed from above, while in small decentralised cottage industry organisation is of a voluntary and democratic character. The latter type of organisation educates the individual better for united, co-operative, disciplined and self-regulated activity. In a democratic organisation the individual unit is given due importance. His initiative is fostered and his responsibility increased. His natural dignity and self-respect as a human being is not only maintained but enhanced. This makes the association of which he is a member a voluntary self-regulating society, in which the members undertake tasks mutually agreed upon by the free exercise of the general will. In such an organisation the individual, as it were, follows the law of his own being. Moreover, he is conscious, that he can one day, under favourable circumstances, play the important role of the leader if he can cultivate the necessary will and capacity. All these advantages and many more are denied to an organisation of dictatorial type which is an imposition from above.

Extent of Organisation

The extent to which Charkha can organise the country-side will be understood and appreciated by a study of some facts and figures given by the Spinners' Association in its annual report for 1938: The figures are revealing. The Association has a capital of about 40,00,000/-. This has provided works for 3,50,000 spinners, weavers and other artisans like carpenters, dyers, printers, dhobies etc. There are about a thousand weaving centres and sale Bhandars; nearly 3000 persons organise this whole activity. The villages covered by the work are more than 50,000. It must, further, be remembered that no portion of the capital of the Spinners' Association is spent outside India. The major part of it represents the earnings of the poor. The organisers receive an average remuneration of about Rs. 25/-to 30/-per month. This is on a par with what is received as wages by the higher classes of skilled labourers. If this capital of about forty lacs were invested in big industry what would be the result? With this modest capital only one small or medium size mill could be organised. Most of the money will have to be used in the purchase of machinery etc. from outside. If any portion of this machinery is damaged or worn out, substitute parts must come from abroad. Not a screw but it is of foreign importation. All the skill and experience gained in the manufacture and supply of machinery is gained by the foreigner. This is in complete contrast to village industry, where whatever is spent goes to benefit the children of the soil. Whatever experience is gained enriches the national life. The organisers in a mill working with a capital of forty lacs will not exceed more than a dozen people. When fully engaged the factory would employ about 1000 to 1500 labourers. Not to talk of the profits of the mill owner or

agent, the salaries drawn by the upper-grade organisers bear no proportion to the wages of the labourer. These contrasts go on ever increasing, creating class conflict, jealousy and hatred. The labourer in a mill feels materially depressed, even when he gets better wages than the village artisan. His moral loss is incalculable. However, to confine ourselves to the scope of organisation of big centralised as compared with small decentralised industry, it will have to be admitted that the organisation created in a mill is strictly limited in scope and is imposed from above. The relation between the employer and the employee is that of the master of the machinery and the wage slave, the exploiter and the exploited. There is no living touch between those who give and those who receive wages, those who command and those who obey. The labourer feels degraded. The employer may feel important and proud. He may live in ostentation and luxury but he purchases material advantages with the poverty of his spirit. There are many things denied to the poor. But few realise the things that are denied to inordinate wealth. It is such obtrusive and ostentatious wealth that is excluded from the kingdom of Heaven by Jesus Christ and other religious reformers. The care and anxiety involved in the accumulation and preservation of wealth are so great and exhausting that there is no time or capacity left to enjoy the moral and cultural benefits that wealth should confer. Even if the rich help the poor they do so under the false idea that they are conferring benefits on others. This breeds in them false pride and arrogance, and besides is not a fact. The fact is that all the wealth of the rich is the result of the efforts of the poor and the organisation of society, in which the masses of the people play the most important part and bear the heaviest burdens. If there is a question of

benefits conferred, the rich are always the debtors. A charitably inclined rich man only makes a partial and insufficient return for the benefits he receives from the poor and from society. Moreover charity enfeebles, the recipient and deprives him of his independence. What the poor want is neither private charity nor governmental dole. They want work and appropriate wages. This ensures them their independence and honour. Both these are good democratic qualities in individuals.

From the political view point the contrast in the quantity and quality of organisation of big and small industry is of the utmost importance. The textile mills in India employ about rupees eighty crores of capital. If India were to be self-supporting on the present basis of cloth consumed per capita, the capital required would be rupees hundred crores. A capital of rupees forty lacs has given us a powerful organisation spread all over India, every member of which is more or less politically conscious. Every spinner, weaver, printer dyer and artisan wears khadi and has some knowledge of its importance in the economy of the nation. In course of time, he gets conscious that he is part of a great national organisation and that though he works for his wage, his work is blessed, as it helps the nation. The Hindu, the Mussalman, the Harijan, the casteman and the casteless, all work together within the organisation. Working together they tend to forget their difference. This happens in a mill too, but in organised cottage industry the extent and degree of this unity achieved is greater, supported as it is by the consciousness of unity of national and patriotic purpose. The organisers of village and cottage industry are a body of disciplined volunteers from whose ranks, if need be, satyagrahis can always be recruited. As a matter of fact, constructive workers constitute a standing army of Satyagrahis.

If all this patriotic organisation spread through the length and breadth of India, is possible with a meagre capital of Rupees forty lacs, one has only to imagive what can be done with a capital of one hundred crores engaged in a similar way in decentralised industry of cloth manufacture.

When Gandhiji talks of Swaraj in terms of Charkha and Khadi, the learned and the modern minded ridicule the idea. They do so because they fail to think in his terms. They merely think in terms of a few millions of yards of thread and a few lacs of thans of khadi woven. They fail to calculate in terms of the organisation that this one item of cottage industry can create. It involves a tremendous, voluntary and co-operative effort towards the mitigation of the poverty and unemployment of the nation. It also eliminates the evil of governmental dole. Building up this one great industry the nation will have laid the foundation for other industries requiring the same sort of organisation. Advocates of violence, for its success, never think in terms of isolated swords, guns, bombs, dreadnaughts or aeroplanes. They think in terms of millions of men with millions of dangerous instruments organised for mutual destruction and slaughter. They also think in terms of the organisation necessary for the production of these machines of destruction. But when our critics think of charkha and khadi they think in terms of these tiny instruments and the product of these in isolation, forgetting the co-operative effort and organisation behind, which are no less important than economic value. They also forget the fact that instruments of war and violence cannot be as destructive as they are in modern times but for the social, political and economic organisations

that are behind the instruments. If the organisation failed the instruments cannot be very formidable. What happens when an army is about to be defeated? It is not always overborne by superior war instruments. Usually its morale, that is, its will or its capacity to remain organised, breaks first. With the break up of the organisation, the instruments become either useless or of use only to the enemy. It has not unoften happened that the army in the field is undefeated but the social or the state organisation of Government behind it gives way. At such times, the army is as good as useless because the cohesive force of organisations, which sustained it, is broken.

Innocent looking Charkha.

There is another trick played on superficial thinkers. A weapon of destruction, even in isolation, looks more formidable and, therefore, more impressive than an instrument of peaceful industry. In factory production too, an arsenal or a gun factory looks more formidable than a textile or sugar mill by the very terror the former excites. The factories of destructive machines look so much more real and impressive! Useful industry and activity carried on from house to house, may not to some minds appear as impressive and grand as an armament factory or the Tata Iron and Steel at Jamshedpur; but this can scarcely be the fault of the innocent, peaceful, unobstrusive, silent cottage industry. It must be some kind of intellectual and visual jaundice that fails to see beauty in small things and is impressed by the big and the powerful alone. The small democratic city-state of Greece did not look as grand and formidable as the empire of a Tamerlane, Alexander, or Napolean; but its worth in terms of spiritual and cultural value exceeds that of all these empires. Moreover, the city state's potency for veil

was infinitely less. Similarly there is less capacity for evil in village industry than in big centralised industry. Those who wish well to their country must not be deluded by mere externals. They must make an effort to understand what Gandhiji says, does and stands for. They must be more scientific in their approach. If they do this they will find that cottage industry has infinite possibilities for free and co-operative industrial and economic organisation and, therefore, for political organisation. If it is so, as I believe it is, the greatest drawback of our national and political life, the incapacity to unite, cooperate, work together and organise, will be removed.

War Time

The organisation created by cottage industry is of service both in peace and war. With the war in Europe all things that we get from abroad have considerably risen in price. In some cases the rise bears no proportion to the original cost. Some articles cannot be had at all. Indian Textile Mills are today working with the mill stores already in stock in India. No new stores are coming from abroad. One of the proposals a shrewd mill agent of Ahmedabad placed before the National Planning Committee, was, that mill stores be purchased by provincial governments in large quantities in anticipation of the war, which was likely. It is not known what happened to this proposal. Perhaps before the Committee could discuss it fully and formulate its views and transmit them to the provincial governments the war in Europe had started. It is quite possible that soon we may have a shortage of textile mill stores and some mills may find it difficult to renew their worn out parts and may have consequently to diminish production or altogether stop work. What may happen to textile mills may happen to other

mills. It may also be that most of what is produced may be requisitioned for military purposes. The products of home industry, run on basis of self-sufficiency of the household, cannot, be requisitioned for military purposes unless the minimum requirements of the householder are first supplied. This is the more necessary because in cottage industry the worker and his family are the most important instruments of production. It may, however, be argued that India is in this plight because it is industrially backward. But industrial backwardness is a fact which cannot be ignored in any relevant argument. However, even industrially advanced countries in the West find much difficulty in getting many things they want in war time. In the present unsettled and uncertain international situation no nation can afford to put itself at the mercy of foreign countries for its vital needs.

In war time it is easy for the enemy to destroy centres of big industry and dislocate production and with it the national life. It is difficult to destroy decentralised units of industry spread through the length and breadth of the country. The cost to the enemy of destroying these innumerable and scattered units will be prohibitive. The gain will not be worth the trouble and the expenditure.

Recently when Shri Jawaharlal visited China no question about India was asked with greater keenness than that of the Indian experiment in Charkha and village industries. Were the new schemes prospering and progressing? What were their possibilities? The Chinese like the Indians get most of their manufactured goods from abroad, specially from Japan. Japan is at war with China. Other sources are cut off. All the seaports are blockaded. The English had to build a new land route from Burma for the

transmission of their goods. It is well known that this land route cannot transmit even a small portion of the goods needed. The new route is not safe from aerial attacks. Today the Chinese cannot afford to patronise Japanese goods as we do British goods. They cannot get what they want from other countries. They are, therefore, obliged to fall back upon their native resources. They have started village industries on co-operative basis for the supply of their most vital and pressing every day needs. The latest information is about their having introduced what they call Gandhi-looms. They, therefore, are naturally curious to know how our experiment in the direction of village industries is prospering and they want to benefit by our experience. Poor Chinese, they scarcely know that the atmosphere here is surcharged with grave radical and scientific doubts. It is the same about non-violence as about Charkha. At a time when serious-minded people, the world over, are looking eagerly and hopefully towards our experiment, we are filled with doubts about the past achievements and future possibilities of non-violence! The argument runs, India may get some concessions by non-violence, it may get even dominion status of a sort but it is impossible for it to get complete independence by this method. Even if India achieves her liberty from the yoke of the greatest imperialism the world has ever known, the question asked is, can she keep that liberty without mailed might? One would have thought the last question could not be logically raised. But it is asked and the advocates of non-violence must answer it. The answer today can only be theoretical and logical and it is that if the new weapon of non-violence can dislodge the present holders of power, it can also deal effectively with the new invaders or conquerors. But

however logical the argument, it fails to carry conviction to men weighed down with doubt and vacilation.

Sir Stafford Cripps* when he was in India is reported to have told Gandhiji, in an interview that he had with him, that Europe and America seemed to be exhausted. They were suffering from decadence. "We are looking for light from China and India." The world may look to us and to our great one for light but we must look away from ourselves and from our man of destiny, to decadent systems and countries for our light. Even at the risk of losing our soul we must look modern. If analysed most of the opposition to non-violence, khadi and village industries is because these so called fads of Gandhiji are neither fashionable nor modern. The modern mind must, therefore, reject them. Many people remark how old fashioned are the followers of Gandhiji, therefore how dull and uninterresting !!! Can they be efficient ? (Today in India the smart looking are the only efficient). Can any light, guidance or initiative come from them ? But if we read history we find that often fishermen have become the fishers of men in the past. Barbarians have often conquerred over-intelligent and over-cultured races whose vitality had been sapped by the craze for fashion and modernity.

But to resume the argument, we may not dismiss a practical plan of economic and political reform because it does not look fashionable and modern and because it entails the doing of something which is not done in modern drawing rooms. Knitting may be done but not spinning. No reformer, no revolutionary can think in such terms. Yet it is precisely those who call themselves by these names that think and act that way. If the revolutionary spirit

*** This refers to his first visit at the end of 1939.**

means anything, it means the capacity for free and fresh thinking unhampered by orthodox modes of thought and conduct. It also means the capacity to stand alone and do the unique and even apparently the ridiculous. Since 1920 Congressmen have shown these qualities in an abundant measure. They have been the wayward and the whimsical in the national family. They have been scoffed and laughed at. It was so in 1920 and again in 1930 at the time of the Dandi march and Salt Satyagraha. If Congressmen now became the normal and the respectable set, doing the usual and the fashionable thing in the right style, they may turn decadent even before their goal is achieved.

CHAPTER TWO

Practical Socialism

Surplus Value

Cottage industry in contrast to big industry is, by its very nature, socialistic in character. After all the essence of socialism is non-exploitation and equality or near equality of incomes. It is difficult to justify the labour theory of value upon which Marx and Engels based some of their important conclusions. No economist, worth the name, considers today the theory sound or correct. But granting its correctness, village industry satisfied the best requirements of the theory. It leaves no surplus value for any employer. The artisan's labour represents the major part of the value of the article made. The worker is his own master and leaves no surplus value to be enjoyed by others. Again socialism stands for the nationalisation of the means of production which today in capitalist countries are in private hands. Private property in the means of production leads to exploitation and wage slavery. If private ownership can by some means be eliminated there can be no economic exploitation. In cottage industry the means of production are not appropriated by an ever diminishing machine and factory owning class. The workers do and can own the simple apparatus with which they work. However, in a poverty stricken country where one-third of the population lives on the brink of starvation from year to year, it may not be possible for a villager to purchase and own his simple machine or tools. In such cases the Spinners' Association, a philanthropic public institution, supplies the instruments of

production gratis or on a system of payment by easy instalments. There are consequently no profits, no rent, or interest. These are after all the essentials of the capitalist system. However, even nationalisation of the instruments of production may be so used by a Government or a state that there may be expliotation of the masses. State-capitalism may be as bad as private capitalism, nay worse; for a state can always put down by its governmental and military machine any effort at combined direct action by labour. State monopolies are always more dangerous than private monopolies. This is exemplified not only in fascist and nazi countries but also in Bolshevic Russia. Cottage industry is not so exposed to this possible danger of state-monopoly and state-capitalism.

Economic equality

There is not much difference of income among those engaged in cottage industries. This equality or near equality of incomes removes the material cause for heart burning, jealousy and hatred. For the mass of the population no false and artificial values are created. In a society arranged on the basis of small decentralised industry there can be no accumulation of inordinate wealth which may be used for ostentation or the purchase of power. There is also no grinding poverty, with its consequent physical and moral degradation. living side by side with insolent might and superabundance. The advantage to the average citizen of such an economic and social order is incalculable. There is no class conflict, or class hatred. Thus one important factor for the most sanguinary conflict in the future is nipped in the bud.

Revolution

But we are told if there are no centralised industries there will be no industrial proletariat, and consequently no hatred and no class conflict and therefore, no revolution. Such an argument implies that revolutions must always be born of class hatred and sanguinary conflict and that no revolution can be created by co-operative and peaceful activity. I am afraid the holders of such views inspite of their boast of being scientific are not quite so. To confuse revolution, which is the law of life in all stages of nature, geological, biological, and socio-political, with a sanguinary struggle, is to manifest an elementary lack of historical and scientific knowledge. Revolutions in all spheres, in all stages of the evolutionary process, beginning from the inorganic, developing into the vegetable, animal and human kingdoms, are always due to a long and laborious evolutionary process which often goes on unobserved. Superficially a child is born when it leaves the mother's womb. But scientifically it is in the process of birth for all the the time it is in the mother's womb. Curtail that time and instead of a birth there will be a miscarriage. Revolution is only the last step in an evolutionary process; and it is not scientifically necessary that the last step be accompanied by thunder, storm or violence. To take another example, if a stone requires 20 strokes of the hammer to break, every separate stroke diminishes its resistance power. Its disintegration may come at the 20th stroke, which may even be the least powerful, but all the previous 19 strokes are an evolutionary process for its dissolution. A mountain precipice may take a few centuries to dissociate itself from the parent rock but to suppose that nothing has been going on during those centuries is absurd. Yet before the appointed hour of its fall the precipice may carry a railway train safe to its destination.

All this is manifest from the study of revolutions in nature. Confining ourselves to human history, it will be found that at the time every revolution looked as if it was a sudden conflagration ; but in cool moments of historical study, analysis, and survey, it has been found that what is called the revolution was only the last step in an evolutionary process. The causes of the French Revolution can be traced at least a century backward. It is the same with the Russian Revolution. The evolutionary process may culminate without burst, explosion or noise. To confuse revolution with thunder, storm, explosion, sound and fury, with the rise of diabolical passions, of which human beings would be ashamed in normal times, is to show an utter lack of historical and scientific knowledge. It would mean that some of the greatest revolutions in history are taken away from that category. Also abject poverty* and starvation do not always make good materials for a revolutionary fight. Often it has been found as economic conditions improve and with their improvement the future expectations of the poor rise and their ideas of what is just and equitable advance, do they make better materials for a revolution.

What the village industry movement seeks to bring about is a silent, co-operative, peaceful and fertilizing revolution, without exciting infernal passions of murder, rapine and rape. It also puts a little more life in the villager and makes him morally more alert and physically more capable of a fight.

* Abject poverty may leave a population resourceless and effortless. This was proved in the Bengal Famine of 1943. People were so physically and morally weakened by slow and progressive starvation that they could do nothing except wait for the end.

But it is said that village industry is not a revolutionary movement but a reactionary movement turning back the hand of the clock of human progress. This is mere assertion. At best it is based upon a confusion of thought. It confuses unconscious and helpless cottage industry with what is advocated by Gandhiji. After all the process of revolution is held, even by the Marxists, to be going on throughout history. What the revolutionary does is to bring consciousness and, therefore, give point and direction to an unconscious movement The old cottage-industry-order was the result of existing circumstances of helplessness, a helplessness that was unconscious because nothing better was possible or envisaged. To-day other and apparently quicker means are possible; but a purposeful and directed selection is made for a higher objective. Moreover purpose and consciousness mean effort at improvement. It is quite possible that efforts at improvement may result in a hand-wheel capable of increasing the output of yarn, several times its present production. If purpose and direction are therefore the necessary ingredients of a revolution, decentralised industry in the present age is as revolutionary as the centralised industry which has produced the capitalistic revolution.

Moreover, a thing does not cease to be revolutionary simply because it is old. Violence is as old as the world itself. Does its use become therefore the less revolutionary when it is applied in the service of a new idea? Violence may be used for propping up an old idea or introducing a retrogade idea; in such cases violence instead of being a revolutionary becomes an anti-revolutionary force. The essence of a revolution is therefore the idea behind it and not necessarily the ways and the means employed to

accomplishing it. In its aim and the idea behind it cottage industry, as conceived by Gandhiji, is revolutionary. But if newness of means is necessary for a revolution, Gandhiji is more revolutionary than the advocates of violence. The latter employ the old time-honoured and time-worn weapon of destruction, while Gandhiji discards it and substitutes for if what has never before been tried in history on a large scale. If newness is of the essence of a revolution violence means simply turn back the hands of the clock of progress, for all human evolution points the way to non-violence and co-operation.

We must not forget that many ordinary and innocent looking activities can be revolutionary. The difference between a social reform and a revolutionary activity, is not necessarily in the activities undertaken, but in the way they are done and the purpose for which they are done. While I was a student in Poona, a no drink campaign was started. It was started under the auspices of the moderates of Poona. Tilak joined it afterwards. As soon as he joined he brought to it political direction and his usual intensity of purpose and activity. There was rigorous picketing and soon the liquor sales in Poona dwindled to insignificance. The result was that the authorities became nervous and were roused to action and there were prosecutions and jail going. As soon as this happened the mere social-reformer was scared away and retired from the field. Ever since the inauguration of the national movement many innocent looking activities have from time to time become revolutionary by the idea behind them and the spirit in which they were undertaken. During the partition movement, for singing Bandemataram, people had to suffer long periods of imprisonment and yet they sang and suffered. They were engaged in a revolutionary

activity. For composing a national song which today nobody would care to remember, the composer had often to pay with his freedom for several years. In 1921 thousands of people went to jail in the process of boycott of the Prince of Wales' visit. Simon Boycott cost the nation the life of a great patriot, the late Lala Lajpatrai. In 1930 the most innocent activity of picking salt on the seashore become a revolutionary activity. The waving of the tricolour has often involved us in lathi charges and has cost the nation some valuable lives. It is, therefore, not necessarily a particular activity chosen that makes a movement revolutionary or reformatory but the aim and the spirit behind it and the way of engaging in it. Removal of untouchability has been called "an old dame's work." But for Gandhiji it is a great and a revolutionary activity. In the same way the innocent looking charkha has, for him, and those who believe with him and work in his faith and spirit, a revolutionary value. The seemingly old age-long cottage industry, undertaken deliberately for a political, economic and social purpose, may not therefore be termed a reformist or a reactionary activity merely because of external appearences. The spirit behind it is not the same. One may or may not agree with the aims of such activities but they cannot on that account be denied their revolutionary character. The very anger and opposition they invoke prove their revolutionary worth.

As for turning the hand of the clock of human progress, that feat is as impossible of performance, as it is to make Ganges to flow back to its source. It simply cannot be done. History repeats itself may be true, but history never repeats itself, is a greater and truer truth. We may not forget that human progress is never in a straight line. Its path is winding. A regress may be necessary even for

progress. Under such circumstances the seeming regress is only a step forward, if for nothing else, then for this, that it adds to human experience and makes for more steady and assured progress in the future. Supposing (what we deny) cottage industry, as conceived by Gandhiji, is a regress, its failure will make our future steps in industrialization firmer and more certain. There will be so much experience gained. The nation will have an army of artisans. An artisan is always a better mechanic than an unskilled labourer.

Equality as a Spiritual Principle

Socialism is based upon the principle of equality. But equality is only a mechanical and a derivative principle At the back of it is the principle of fraternity which implies justice, goodwill and love. Equality without human love, kindness and charity is only an external device. It may exist without good will. Its driving force must therefore come from a moral and spiritual and not a mechanical principle. Such a principle will be that of non-violence or love which rests upon the recognition of the one-ness of the human family. There can be no peace or goodwill in society unless we believe with Christ that we are all 'members one of another' or with the Vedantist that all is one. Equality deprived of that fundamental principle of oneness will be only external and mechanical. It will be merely an institutional device which may be by-passed by clever men. It will leave the individual and the group unregenerate.

Human progress throughout history is marked both by internal, and institutional reform. If the inner being is reformed but the appropriate external and organisational machinery through which the spirit is to manifest itself is lacking, there will be loss of balance and consequent

reaction. On the other hand if human nature is sought to be reformed merely through external and organisational devices, unregenerate human nature will soon assert itself and upset the balance. The examples of these two lines of approach and their failure, in isolation, are plentiful in history. There have been reformers who sought to convert only the inner being and left social institutions untouched. The result was that there was advance for sometime. The zeal of the new faith conquered individuals and regulated their lives to a higher good. They breathed a purer and more rarified atmosphere. But society and its external institution were not appropriately changed. The result was that in course of time society asserted itself and brought the individual to its own level by its very dead weight. In recent times we had an institutional advance nullified by unregenerate heart. The League of Nations was an external device for peace among nations. But the national minds, of those composing it, were full of animosities, hatred, greed and aggrandisement. The result was that the machinery toppled down. It will be argued that collapse was due to the machinery itself being defective. May be, but why was a defective machinery set up ? The cause of it will be found in the fact that the moral and spiritual will to brotherhood and love among nations was wanting.

One often hears today that our present civilisation suffers from loss of balance and that our material advance has outstripped our moral perception. What does this mean ? It only means that while there has been a better organisation of external nature there has been no proportionate advance in our inner moral nature. The psyche of man has not kept pace with his economic, political and scientific progress. For a permanent advance,

therefore, the inner and the outer being must be reformed. In spiritual language the kingdom of Heaven must be established on earth. There must be a kingdom, that is an external organisation, and it must be heavenly, that is the moral will must be behind it. You may not deprive men and women of moral and spiritual values and expect them to live in peace, concord, love and charity simply through the agency of external rules and regulations. The thing simply cannot be done on that level. It was, therefore, that long ago the great Greek philosopher, Plato, declared, that the evils of the state could not be cured unless kings became philosophers and philosophers kings. Analysed it comes to this, that those upon whom falls the task of organising external social relations must be informed and guided by moral principles. If this is not done, moulders of the destinies of men will lack the spirit of love, service and due humility. They will soon fall prey to the corrupting influences of power. If merely external machinery is created for the regulation of life and individuals are full of greed, jealousy and hate, the machinery will break down sooner than later.

Means and ends

Socialism in the West, specially, the variety of it which is called scientific, whose prophets are Marx and Engels and whose apostles of faith are Lenin and Stalin, has turned the moral and spiritual principle underlying socialism into an institutional and material device for achieving economic equality. The marxist believes in the material theory of the universe, as re-interpreted by dialectical materialism. Materialism which is supposed to be based on science has little to do with moral will and values It is therefore indifferent about means. Provided a

particular external aim is achieved, it does not matter what means are employed. The only moral means, if the word moral yet has any significance, are those that achieve success. Means for achieving success may change. Whatever means changing times and circumstances dictate or are disclosed to the high priests of materialism are moral means. Morality, therefore, is an ever changing device for the achievement of success. Its source is human, falible and changing knowledge. Only, this knowledge is supposed to be perfect in the holders of political power whose interpretation of every theory must be considered the only true interpretation. The holders of political power are the new elect to whom nature has revealed all her secrets!

For illustration, we have the whole run of recent revolulionary Russian history. If the peasants can be induced to rise against the landlords, by the cry 'All land to the peasants' the cry may be temporarily raised. If there are any impatient idealists who think in terms of scientific socialism and nationalisation of the land, they must be deciminated? They are defeating the aim in view. If the peasants refuse to hand over agricultural produce to the cities, except on the old system of purchase and sale, modify your economy by creating the N. E. P. with its class of middlemen. Allow these to work for private profit, all the time waiting to liquidate them when a favourable opportunity occurs. If again there are those who disagree have a purge. Having created and encouraged the formation of the small farmers, the Kulaks, when you have the power and ability strike them with fire and sword and have fresh purge of those, who were erstwhile your companions, and even your betters. Ban all religion. Preach it as the opiate of the masses. Demolish the Churches; destroy the priests. If the work seems too

much for your revolutionary ardour, curb your zeal, go slow but all the time consider this truce only as an armed peace. At the same time preach your own ideology in a manner that it may become a fanatical creed with its Pope and its High Priests whose interpretation must be conclusive on all matters of orthodoxy. Embalm and mumify the dead body of your leader and put it in a museum for the worship of the millions. Of course this deification of the dead is not a religious superstition but scientific propaganda. It does not matter if the ignorant millions do not understand the difference. Have a dictatorship of a party and give it the respectable name of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Drive away the remaining of your companions and be the sole Director but use the old name to delude the gullibles of your and other lands. Flood the world with books and pamphlets for the science of psychology teaches that if a lie is repeated long enough it becomes the Truth. Rule out all history. Say all those who consolidated kingdoms or made empires were blood thirsty robbers. But when you yourself want to expand, have anniversaries of those heroes and teach the young to take pride in them. Ancient Dictators had fear of some sort of God, ghost or a hobgoblin in their hearts which mitigated their oppressions. But the new Dictators whether of the Fascist or Bolshevik variety are scientific. They believe neither in God nor in ghosts. They, therefore, have no fear except for that which is beyond their power to achieve. And what can be beyond their power!

In International politics run down democracy. Call it the capitalist conspiracy. Denounce the League of Nations as a League of Robbers. Join this nest of robbers when it suits your purpose. Leave it when that purpose is served. Teach your followers that all movements for

national emancipation are devised to establish capitalist or bourgeois rule. Then right about turn. Tell them that in colonial countries national struggles are revolutionary and, therefore, in the right direction. In India, tell your followers first to denounce the Congress as a bourgeois organisation and afterward, when the scales fall from your eyes, ask them to join and strengthen the Congress and make it powerful for the ultimate purpose of driving away those who differ from you. In Germany, denounce the Wemier republic and secretly abet its overthrow. In the Italo-Abyssinian war sell petrol to a fascist power for mean lucre. In Spain refuse help to those who are fighting for the liberation of the country but who unfortunately do not hold to your variety of socialism. In the present war make it easy and convenient for Germany to commence hostilities by entering into alliance with Hitler. When once you have joined Nazi Germany teach your blind followers that this "last stronghold of defeated capitalism" is nearer to Bolshevism than imperial democracies. Swallow up half of Poland as the price of your neutrality and announce that it is all in the interest of the Polish proletariat. Strangle the Baltic States and let all your apologists justify the war on Finland on the ground that it is the base of mean intrigue of the Allied Powers and if you do not devour it your enemies (undeclared of course) will have it. When you declare war on Finland say that you are only helping a proletariat government that is in revolt against the capitalist regime in Finland. However, when you get an advantageous peace forget all this and come to terms with the orthodox capitalist regime in Finland. Turn your wistful gaze towards the

Balkan States. Let your foreign policy follow the traditional lines laid down in your history under the Tzars.*

With all this wealth of evidence, why look, in poor Gandhi's camp, for blind followers? At least the latter do not swear by the light of reason and science. They are after all people who believe in some sort of faith in those wiser than themselves and who also believe in certain fixed moral values. Much may, therefore, be forgiven them.

But we are told that all these things are done by other imperial powers. That is perfectly true. The only difference is that those powers are frankly imperialist and aggressive and are not out to establish a new heaven on earth. They are not out to establish a new order based upon justice, equity and international peace. They are not the hope of the poor, the young and the enthusiast. But why blame? Judged by their own standards, that there can be no fixed moral values, that equality and justice are merely institutional and material devices, the Communists are right. The only mistake they make is that they want to accomplish moral and idealistic ends through material means. They want to abolish violence by greater violence and war by more ruthless war. They want to destroy diplomacy by shrewder and not by honester diplomacy. They want to destroy darkness by greater darkness. What does it matter that such experiments, for establishing peace, goodwill and truth, have

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* Since this was written Bolshevic politics have been even more opportunist and Imperialistic and the communist parties outside Russia more subservient to the interests of the "Fatherland of the Proletariat" as conceived by the dictatorship there.

never succeeded in the past? The possibilities of history are not exhausted!

What I have said about Russia here, is not to condemn it or to hold it up to ridicule. My purpose is to show the inherent defect of its principles and the natural consequences of its ideology. If results are to be the measure of human conduct, and if theory is to be adjusted to convenient practice and the latter is to justify the former, it would require divine power and perfection to act correctly and justly. Such power and perfection can naturally brook no opposition. However the fact is that human reason is neither perfect nor omniscient. Nor again is human power the deciding factor in world affairs. Human beings can but see a section of the truth at a particular time. Their light must be illumined by some higher values and principles, to which they must hold fast whether success crowns their efforts or failure dogs their footsteps. The theory of justification by success takes for granted that results are in human hands and that particular results flow from known particular causes without fail. Both propositions are not quite true. Human beings can at most initiate action.

Need of a measure

Man needs a measure for his conduct or else he with his passions, prejudices and partial light, becomes himself the measure. In group action the most powerful individual or a coterie becomes the measure of right and wrong. Ultimately humanity is driven to the brutal doctrine that might alone is right and that success justifies everything. If this is to be avoided, man must build his life on some principles and must remain true to certain loyalties which may not be dispensed with, in the anxious desire to achieve

certain ends however laudable. If principles and loyalties can be changed at will there can be no reasonable expectation formed of human conduct. The friend, the comrade, and the companion in arms may be as uncertain of our designs as the enemy. (Who knows when the friend will be considered the enemy!) If we can with impunity deceive the enemy we can do so with as clear a conscience the friend and the companion merely because the latter fail to conform to what we, for the time being, consider orthodoxy. Every action then is justified by results. No reliance can be placed upon a solemnly pledged word. At convenience it can be broken with friend and foe alike. In such an arrangement of society there can be no regard for truth, for truth itself must follow practical needs of the hour and be justified by results. If there can be no truth there can be no love or loyalty. The only nexus binding men and women must be derived from "The Cause" and its success as conceived by those in power. The most sacred bonds of friendship and love can be snapped if they interfere with the schemes laid down by those who have the state machinery in their hands. There has been no dearth of the children of the new order in Russia denouncing their parents and bringing trouble on their heads. Such acts have been applauded and families broken up. In such a society there can be but one loyalty. We know the results of this doctrine of a single overpowering loyalty in religion. It has painted the pages of the history of many religions red, which, by an irony of fate, is also the special colour of the communists. In the name of an overmastering loyalty the innocent were broken on the rack, cross and the gibbet or burnt alive. In its name the saint and the scientist were martyred. The 18th

and 19th century enlightenment and reform was a protest against such fanatical one-sidedness. The medieval doctrine of a single exclusive religious loyalty, that was indifferent to the means employed, was however in favour of an inexhorable Lord of Love. Even then it could not save humanity from blood and fire. How much more cruel and destructive must such a doctrine be, when it is yoked to material creeds which altogether discard the doctrines of truth, charity and humility, as evidence of decadence and weakness! As in olden times, religious fanaticism created counter fanaticism, so now the communist fanaticism, in the service of the new god of the proletariat, creates the counter fanaticism of fascism and nazism, which pretends to act in the exclusive service of the Chosen People. The thesis of communism finds its antithesis in fascism and nazism. It is historically untrue that the latter creeds are the last refuge of defeated capitalism. Hitler and Mussolini are friends of the capitalist and landlord so long and in so far only as the latter support their basic policies Mussolini in his land reforms did not hestitate to de-vest the landlords. Hitler has not shown himself very tender to the capitalists. Whenever the supposed good of the state has required it, the propertied classes have been fleeced. Labour has likewise been put down whenever this has been found necessary by the holders of power. Both the Italian and German dictators, however, find that private ownership, of some of the instruments of production, is the most economic way for the development of the state. As soon as they find that public ownership will serve their purpose better, they will not hesitate to take steps to bring it about. It is true that the propertied and capitalist classes have supported

fascism and nazism in their own interests and out of fear of bolshevism. But that only proves that for the time being the mutual interests of capitalism and fascism happen to be identical.

Fundamental Moral Values

There are undoubtedly some fundamental moral values which humanity may not ignore and the ignoring of which would make life in society impossible. One such value is Truth. There is, it would appear, one eternal and absolute Truth, as Plato would say, the Idea of Truth. This Truth however expresses itself in time and space, through name and form and through the mind of man. The actual forms that Truth takes under a particular set of circumstances vary. The customs and the institutions in which this one Truth is embodied are as various as human nature. Truth therefore keeps on changing its facets. Humanity is always experimenting and arranging and re-arranging its affairs. A particular set of customs, institutions and forms that best embodied this Truth at a particular time may come to lose the original impulse and meaning and become not only empty forms and devoid of the spirit of Truth but may get so corrupt as to defeat its very purpose. This often happens and that is what evidently the poet meant when he wrote:

"*Old order changeth yielding place to new*
And God fulfills Himself in many ways.
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world".

A good custom can corrupt the world only when the spirit that informed it and made it useful and serviceable gets either exhausted or is so vitiated that instead of being

the medium of the expression of the good becomes the vehicle of evil. When this happens the remedy does not lie in scepticism about the existence of fundamental values or a declaration that there is no such thing as Truth. The remedy lies in reverting back to the original fountain-head, and in its light devise new shapes and forms and create new customs and institutions that would embody more perfectly the spirit of Truth, in a given set of circumstances and at a given time. But if, instead of abolishing a particular set of fallible and variable 'customs', we abolish all values we would be abolishing all point of reference and standards of conduct, except the doubtful one of success, as we conceive it. As a matter of fact, this has been exactly the result of the modern rejection of permanent values. Men and nations have lost their bearings. They have become the blind playthings, not so much of natural forces which they have to a certain extent controlled, but of the social forces which elude their grasp. They, as individuals, are so caught up by the group forces of caste, class, race and nation that their boasted freedom of will appears to count for nothing. They feel that they cannot get out of the social bondage in whose creation they had no part. They have become like dumb driven cattle without will because without direction. In perhaps no country in the world has the generality of the people wanted war. Yet somehow every nation is helplessly driven to it. The wills of the individuals, composing it, seem not to count. In ancient days if a person wanted to escape from the tyranny of the group he could at least take to religious life and retire from the affairs of the world. But to-day even this escape is not open to him. He is forcibly yoked to the citizen's life and there, he is forced to carry out the will of unknown and uncontrollable social forces.

Law of Cause and effect

We may not forget that results of human actions are not altogether in human hands. They depend upon a combination of circumstances, not always known, and when known, not always under human control. It is a well known fact in science that like result may flow from unlike causes. If this is so in physical sciences, when the investigator has to deal with comparatively static matter and when the disturbing causes can be more or less effectively eliminated, how much more so must this be the case when we have to deal with uncertain and changing conditions and under circumstances where the disturbing causes are various and cannot be altogether illuminated at the will of the investigator? Moreover, the ideal conditions that can be produced and reproduced in a science laboratory cannot be created at will in the laboratory of society. Repetition of experiment under ideal conditions is out of the question. Under such circumstances there can be no scientific certainty about the so-called laws of the social sciences. There was a time when in the name of the scientific laws of *laissez faire* economics no restrictions could be put on child and woman labour. All education, even the most rudimentary, was denied to the masses and slum conditions were allowed to be created in all industrial towns. The protests of reformers like Ruskin and Carlyle, to the obvious wrong and injustice done to the workers, fell on deaf ears. If such injustice is to be avoided some fundamental moral principles, to which human conduct may be safely referred, become necessary. Atleast the average man and woman need such principles. In their absence, human conduct is bound to be uncertain and whimsical and the only criterion of right and wrong must be success as understood

by the actor himself. Therefore, the need for some rules and principles.

Even science needs a permanent principle like truth for its investigation. All scientific investigation and knowledge is based upon the correct reporting of what is seen and sensed. Passion, prepossession and prejudice born of custom, habit and self-interest have no place in scientific investigation. If regard for truth and freedom from passion and prejudice must guide us in science, and the absence of these will upset our scientific calculations, they must be our guide, even more so, in humanistic studies. We must be prepared to abandon our pet theories if they are not borne out by facts. But we know the fate of all those whose investigations, in various fields of study, in communist and fascist countries, have led them to conclusions against the new orthodoxies, at the hands of those who hold the reins of power! In thought and the investigation of knowledge, worse than mediaeval conditions have been reproduced and suppression is more thorough than in former times, because today the machines of repression are more scientific and destructive.

The objectors however tell us that a belief in fundamental moral values has often landed humanity in superstition, fanaticism and hypocrisy. All change and progress in the past has been resisted in the name of fundamental moral principles. That may be true; but defective as the measure is, it is better than no measure at all. Some fixed moral principles are a better measure for conduct than passing whims or passions of a group or an individual. To have no measure means anarchy. This anarchy, if not checked by principles, will be kept under control by a dictator or a

bureaucrat. History bears ample evidence to this. The danger of having no measure is exemplified in Russian trials where the very authors of the revolution have often been arraigned on charges of sabotage and betrayal. If the official theory is to be believed these great ones of the revolution turned traitors to the cause because they were no more in office or their brand of communism was not accepted. In countries guided by orthodox moral conventions we rarely find first-rate politicians turning traitors and going over to the enemy simply because their views are not accepted or because their ambitions for office are not fulfilled! Such things very rarely happen in capitalist democracies. The elementary morality of the best sons of the revolution, it would appear, cannot stand the strain of adverse circumstances as well as that of the despised bourgeoisie. May this be not due to the fact that the communist revolution has taken away the belief in fundamental moral values? With the disappearance of this belief all old restraints and loyalties have been swept away. It is quite possible that most of the morality of the capitalist order has lost its significance, and become conventional. But that only means that something more spiritual and fundamental is needed. It does not mean that humanity can do without principles. Till current morality is refined in the light of fundamental moral principles, even existing conventions are not without value. They keep average humanity within certain limits. There are at least certain things that simply cannot be done. In a capitalist country a disappointed politician may not turn a traitor or play the saboteur. Why? Because such things are not done. They are done only by the lowest and most degraded criminals.

CHAPTER THIRD

Socialism and Democracy as Moral Principles

I have stated that cottage industry is socialistic in character. I believe that socialism is based upon the principle of economic equality which again is based on the principles of co-operation and non-violence. In the economic field socialism asserts the equality and therefore the dignity of man. It is the externalisation of the principle of human oneness and solidarity.

The purpose fulfilled by socialism in the economic field is the same as that of democracy in the political field. Democracy asserts the oneness and dignity of man in the political field. Here the individual with his vote, however humble, is equal to the mightiest in the land. His theoretical possibilities of political advance are the same. Before democracy established this political equality society was divided between kings and subjects, rulers and ruled. Democracy established alternate rule and subjection. As a voter the individual participates in the formation of the Governmental will. As a citizen he renders obedience to a self-imposed law. The essence of liberty is not that an individual may be free to follow his chaotic inclinations, passions and appetites but that his will should be organised and that he should consent to be ruled by the higher reason in him. This regulated liberty, the only human liberty as distinguished from license, is possible in a democratic society. Democracy also puts a

stop to armed and violent internal political conflict. It thus embodies a moral principle in the political field. A moral principle, if not hindered in it's manifestation, must be progressive in action. It must always spread its sphere of influence. In due course the democratic principle should have advanced from internal to external and international non-violence. It had also the germs of progressively tackling the problem of economic inequality. But before it had time to expand its scope it was over-reached by the new capitalist and imperial order.

Alongside democracy the Western world made the modern scientific and geographical discoveries. As a consequence the internal economic order and the international political balance were disturbed. The democratic vote had no value in an economically maladjusted society. Capitalist production divided society between the inordinately rich and the miserably poor, between the few *haves* and the many *havenots*. The equality that was scarcely achieved in politics was soon lost by the back door of economic inequality. Capitalism also created the modern empire. Thus the democratic idea instead of expanding itself in the economic and the international fields, was narrowed even in the internal political field. The modern nations have progressively organised themselves more for foreign war than for peaceful activity. To-day every nation lives in war tension. Its activity in peaceful times is regulated and guided by international actual or prospective, strife. Its economic, agricultural, industrial and even educational and religious policies are so devised as would be useful in time of war. A society living in perpetual war tension cannot enjoy the fruits of internal democracy. War in a democratic country must result in dictatorial and bureacratic methods being employed in

administration. Such methods cannot but be inimical to democracy. Capitalism and capitalist imperialism have therefore almost completely destroyed political democracy in the western countries.

Moreover as democracy was conceived more as an external and organisational political device than a moral principle, very little attention was paid to the fundamental value of oneness, tolerance, and love on which it was based. The encroachments of capitalism and imperialism were therefore not easily detected. At present, however, when the principle of democracy is being threatened by the totalitarian states, the advocates of democracy have begun dimly to perceive that it (democracy) is a moral principle worth preserving. Some few have realised that this moral principle is inconsistent with economic capitalism and politico-economic imperialism. The logic of such a position is so apparent that British politicians deny the very existence of the empire, without in the least relinquishing their hold on it.

If humanity has to advance, the moral principle underlying political democracy must be safeguarded. Its real enemies are within the so-called democratic countries. Not only must it be safeguarded but it must be allowed full scope for its manifestation in the economic and international spheres. Scientific socialism, with all historical knowledge, instead of realising that political democracy was being smothered by capitalism and the modern empire, made the former (Political democracy) responsible for the latter. In earlier days of communist propaganda political democracy, which was wrongly confused with chaotic individualism of the capitalist order, was as vehemently and bitterly attacked as

capitalism and imperialism. Laterly Russia was willing to ally itself with democratic countries as against fascist powers. It joined the League of Nations. Ultimately however it cast its lot with totalitarian and Nazi Germany, with motives known only to the initiate.

The principle of democracy must therefore be rescued from capitalism and imperialism. It must be combined with social and economic democracy. This is possible only by the establishment of economic socialism. In the international sphere empires must be liquidated if democracy is to prevail all round.

Communism and Democracy

Russia has established economic socialism. But so far it appears to be at the expense of political democracy. We are, however, assured that as soon as normal internal and international balance is restored, dictatorship in Russia will resuscitate democracy. This to-day appears to be almost an impossibility both from the theoretical and the practical view points. Theoretically, democracy is based upon the recognition of the individual as a free, moral and spiritual entity. Communistic philosophy, however, does not believe in the free moral individual. According to it, the individual is only an *ensemble* of social relations. He gains his worth and value from these relations. Apart from these he is nothing. Such a view deprives man of his moral dignity as an individual. To compensate him for this loss, he is guaranteed economic competence. Even as in a bee-hive or an ant-hill, the individual is merged in the group. He can have no freedom apart from the group. He is but a cell in the body social. Till international communism is established he is as much of a cell in the state as under fascism and

nazism. Such a position, assigned to the individual, cuts at the very root of democracy. Practically, the individual slaughtered at the altar of communism can never be resurrected.

Communism and Planning

Communism also believes in big centralised production. As a consequence it believes in strictly planned production and distribution. All this would require for its management and smooth working a tremendous amount of centralisation. It would require the services of a body of experts and specialists. Politics and economics will be much more complex and complicated than in a society with decentralised industry and agriculture. The complexity introduced will be beyond the understanding of the ordinary citizen, who will find the job too much for himself and leave it in despair to the experts. There will be few, if any, checks upon the will of the centralised bureaucracy. Power will be concentrated in the hands of specialists, bureaucrats and politicians. The many may be guaranteed economic security but beyond that there will be little scope for them. Whatever initiative remains with local units of industry, agriculture and government, will be too feeble and meagre to safeguard democratic liberty. In such a society nothing can be disturbed without a great deal of re-shuffling and re-adjustment. Initiative and direction must remain in the hands of a progressively narrowing group.

Communist activities in Russia, economic, social, political, cultural, educational and spiritual, are carefully regulated. There is no sphere left to individual free choice in any sphere of activity. Genius unless it conforms to a given and approved pattern, is discountenanced and discouraged. The state discharges for the individual

the duties of the parent, the family, and the social, industrial, political, cultural and spiritual group. From such crushing centralisation there can be no escape for the mere individual. We in India know the cramping effects of the joint family, the caste, the commune and the guild. In all these, economic security of a sort was assured. But what was starved is the free individual with his will and initiative. Whenever and wherever man has fought for his emancipation, he has sought to loosen the shackles of the group, the family, the caste, commune and the guild. Thus has he achieved his emancipation as an individual. It would appear that communism wants to build not upon the gains of the 18th and 19th century emancipation of the individual but to reintroduce in a new and more rigid form the old handicaps. Marxism assured us that with the establishment of socialism and a classless society the millenium will be attained and the state will automatically fade away. The idea of the state fading away is simply the extension of the individualist and liberal theory that that state is the best which rules the least. The fading away of the state can be accomplished only in favour of the culturally and morally self-regulated individual. For communism which does not believe in the individual but the group, such a consummation can be neither desirable nor possible. The state instead of fading away will become increasingly powerful and all pervasive. Instead of the least government there will be the most of it. It will spread its tentacles over the whole of life. It will be with us from the cradle to the grave. There will be no free institutions left. Even the social club must be controlled by the new Leviathan. Ancient tyrannies and dictatorships, even when they were most powerful and militarily organised, did not interfere with many of the

activities of the social group or the individual. A Chengiz Khan or a Temurlane did not seek to regulate the morals and the education of his people. Their art and culture were their own concern. But the new communist order must regulate everything for its citizens. This strict regimentation in all spheres of human activity must ultimately dwarf the individual by taking away his initiative and free activity.

Till world communism is established there must be a totalitarian state with most of the evils of the fascist or nazi state. As soon as such a state imagines that it is threatened from outside, it will seek to become a powerful military state. The next step will be to threaten the liberty of its weaker neighbours for the avowed object of securing scientific and defensible borders ostensibly for self-protection, conveniently forgetting that the danger of proximity exists for smaller rather than bigger and militarily powerful states. In the last Russo-Finnish conflict* it was of course assumed that there was no danger to Finland from Russian proximity. The danger strangely enough was the other way about ! Power politics not only dispense with logic but also a sense of humour. In Aesop's fables the existence of the lamb is always a danger to the poor wolf ! In a sense this is true. The lamb excites the wolf's cupidity! Of course the swallowing up of small states will always be undertaken in the service of the New Idea. Unfortunately the victims, as usual, will fail to recognise that they are slaughtered in the interests of a good cause, which is also theirs though they know it not. The victims of Communism to-day foolishly think that it makes no difference

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*This refers to the first war between Russia and Finland 1939.

whether they are oppressed and suppressed in the interests of a new ideology and not by a national, a racial or a capitalist imperialism ! The new crusade will duly establish a new Holy Empire.

Communism therefore, whatever its economic merits is distinctly a political, cultural and spiritual regress for humanity. It solves the economic problem by exacting too heavy a price. Need humanity necessarily pay such a price?

Requirements of a new Society

For a free, integrated and co-operative society it is necessary to preserve the gains of political democracy and add to them economic socialism and international peace. Economic equality must not be purchased at the price of political and spiritual slavery. There must be an amount of free activity in every sphere of life. This can best be guaranteed under an economic system of decentralised industry which affords free play to the choice and intiative of individuals and groups under the minimum necessary controls. Decentralised industry also provides a variety of occupation. Men and women engaged in it are not mere cogs in the productive machine. They are not merely members of the proletariat. Every individual or at least the majority will be engaged in some creative and fruitful art or craft. The decentralisation envisaged by cottage industry is not the sort that is merely a feeder to big industry in which the workers in their homes and cottages manufacture for big factories and capitalist concerns only parts of articles about whose use and value they are ignorant. In cottage industry on the contrary the worker works on his own and produces mostly finished goods. His work thus becomes creative, helping him to develop his initiative and his inventive and artistic capacities. Moreover instead

of working in a centralised factory, situated in a congested city, the artisan works in the purer atmosphere of his village home, with plenty of sunshine and fresh air. He learns no uselessly expensive habits. He is comparatively free from group jealousy and group hatred. His social life is cleaner. His food, drink, habitation and other enjoyments are natural and healthy. He does not suffer from a sense of suppression, injustice and tyrannyl The condition of the worker in village industry I have described here may appear fanciful and idyllic. But it must not be forgotten that I am describing it as it can be made. I am also describing it in comparison and contrast to the condition of those who work in big centralised factories, in unhygienic surroundings, housed in narrow tenements where they are huddled together several men, women and children in one room. When the mother goes to work the children play about in the city gutters. When a woman worker is in child-birth there is no kindly neighbour to help. When rent is unfortunately in arrears the worker and his family are thrown on the streets. In the village every worker has at least his ancestral home and neighbours whom he has helped in need and who therefore are willing to make an adequate return for benefits received.

But it is argued that communism eliminates all such bad and depressing conditions that mark capitalist economics. We are not sure if it can eliminate all the social evils of centralised production. For instance a worker in coa-mines cannot help being cooped in underground and cut off from light of the day, whether he works for a mono. polist capitalist or a monopolist state. Whether a factory belongs to an individual or a group, the deafening sounds of hammer and anvil cannot be eliminated. Fumes from a chemical factory or oil well do not change their odour

under a capitalist or communist economy. Congestion in large cities will be the same under both regimes. But even if we admit for argument's sake that these evils of centralised industry will be eliminated under communism or state capitalism, (to-day there is no difference between these except in the names used) they will be eliminated, as we have already stated, at the cost of democracy and the free individual. Cottage industry on the other hand would mean robust independent peasant and artisan classes. The members of these classes make very good material for democracy. They are free fom proletarian habits of mass psychology and the herd instinct. If, with their sturdy independence and pride in their homes and hearths, they will not be inflammable material for a bloody revolution, they will also not easily tolerate totalitarian tyranny and dictatorship. As a matter of fact, it is these classes that wrested power from kings and nobles and established, in the past, democracy.

Centralised Production and dictatorship

After all the boss in the factory is the prototype of the dictator in the state. Those who have been habituated unquestioningly to work under a petty dictator in the industrial field are not the likely ones to protest against dictatorship in the state. What is dictatorship but over-centralisation in government? The proletariat used to socialised and centralised industry, even when it creates a revolution, can think only in terms of communism and not of democracy. This is natural, for a member of an industrial or agricultural proletariat is nothing in himself outside the group. He has no individuality of his own. He therefore readily surrenders, what he never possessed, to a party or an individual. He has always been regimented. On the other hand the peasant proprietors

and the artisans are less likely to fall prey to a dictatorship. In Russia we know how difficult it was for the authorities to liquidate the small landed-owner. With the creation of an independent class in agriculture and industry it will be possible to combine political democracy with economic socialism. The two great principles need not then work at cross purposes or at the expense of each other.

If in internal politics cottage industry guarantees to humanity economic socialism and political democracy in the international field it eliminates one of the most potent cause for imperialism and war. The present day imperialism is so intimately linked up with centralised big industry that the Marxists have come to believe that in human history only economic causes have created empires. Whether such a view is historically correct or not there is little doubt that empires as they exist today have been created and made possible by centralised big industry. They exist to help and strengthen these industries and their capitalist owners. Modern industry and modern empire mutually help each other. If centralised over-production were to cease the incentive to colonies, empire and earth hunger would appreciably diminish. Nay, these may even cease, for colonies and empire will then not be the paying propositions that they are to-day, but losing concerns. Instead of helping the nation they are likely to become an unbearable burden, involving the expense of the defence of the conquered and adding to the heavy burden of taxation. There will be under such circumstances no mad search after markets for superfluous and injurious goods, nor will there be a frantic rush for raw material. Political power will not be needed for such purposes. Production will be more or less automatically adjusted to

internal consumption and if need be to mutually beneficial foreign trade.

Foreign Trade

Foreign trade is no new phenomenon in the world. Only its range and scope has greatly increased in modern times. In ancient days too, large quantities of goods, specially manufactured goods, moved from one country to another. Ancient and mediæval India had commercial relations with almost the whole of the then known world. Its fabulous wealth was not the result of its agriculture or the export of its raw materials. Export of agricultural produce and raw materials was almost impossible in those days. What India exported were manufactured goods that embodied great value in small bulk. These articles were not the result of any centralised mechanised industry but of home and cottage industries. India, from abroad, got in return gold, silver and precious stones. This was the secret of her fabulous wealth which, with the dawn of modern age, excited the cupidity of the western world. It was this wealth that in earlier times had excited the greed of the Tartar, the Pathan and the Moghul, from beyond the northern borders. They came not to spread Islam by their sword but in search of rich booty. Spread of Islam was a mere convenient slogan to enthuse followers. This enthusiasm was however being constantly kept by the rich booty that was distributed among them. Some of the raiders afterwards found that to establish kingdoms and empires would better ensure this booty, whose stream would be ever flowing. Their successors, the European free booters, wanted, to begin with, only a share in the rich Indian international trade. But they soon discovered that empire was better business than international trade.

They find it so even today, when they talk of British vested interests. As a matter of fact, all other interests whether of the minorities, the landlords or the princes, in the last resort, are useful only in so far as they subserve British commercial and industrial interests. The army is there to protect these inequitous interests.

It is not therefore correct to say that with decentralised industry all international commerce and exchange of goods will cease and with the stoppage of it people will become narrow and parochial. Goods will and can flow as quickly as now. It may be that for transport and some other key industries, a measure of centralisation may be necessary. But a great deal of production, specially of articles of daily and constant use and consumption can be profitably decentralised. Even when centralisation, owing to the requirements of modern civilization, is necessary, it may be so organised under popular control as to avoid concentration of wealth and power.

As to decentralised industry turning people parochial and narrow, there is so much of misunderstanding, pettiness, jealousy and hatred between nation and nation to-day, inspite of the annihilation of distances and commercial intercourse as would put to shame the ancient and mediæval times, when distances separated one people from another and travel was difficult and the means of communication meagre and slow. Narrowness and Fanaticism are not caused so much by the lack of communications and contact as by the lack of the spirit of neighbourly co-operation and good will. The barriers separating man from man and nation from nation are more psychic and moral than physical. So far as they are based upon greed, exploitation and material inequalities they will be greatly diminished with decentralised industry.

Modern Industry and armaments

If capitalist centralised production today creates empires and disturbs international peace and involves the world in total wars, it also furnishes these deadly conflicts with the necessary organisation and weapons. Cottage and village industry would to a great extent check the manufacture of the deadly weapons and machines, with which modern wars are fought on land, in water and air. The mere transfer of armament industry from private to state hands will not check the quantity and quality of the manufacture of arms. States, whether in the past or now, are not less ambitious and less rapacious than private individuals or corporations. It is a historical fact that the multiplication of war machines has been made possible by centralised and mechanised industry. Their present destructive and deadly nature is also due to the same cause. It would not be possible to manufacture big machine-guns, armoured cars, dreadnoughts and super-fortresses by means of cottage industry. Modern armaments and centralised industry are inextricably linked together. If destructive war machines can be made less deadly and their number and variety diminished, international wars may not altogether disappear but there is no doubt that their destructiveness and cruelty will greatly diminish. As destructiveness and cruelty decrease ill-will and hate will also decrease.

If centralised industry supplies modern wars with its weapons it also supplies the fighting armies with a complex and centralised organisation. The organisation of modern armies closely follows the organisation of a mill or a factory. With the mechanisation of the army which began in World-War I, the army organisation has progressively followed the pattern of industrial organisation. Factories also supply the army with the mechanical skill that is

necessary for the conduct of modern wars. Both from the point of view of supply of war machines and organisation centralised and mechanised industry helps international conflict and war. Village industry will check both the manufacture of arms and the necessary organisation for the conduct of the modern wars.

Pleasure and Plenty

It is said that centralised big industry with its high production and plenty and consequent leisure has made it possible for the modern world to escape from the ancient and mediæval drudgery inseparable from an economy of scarcity and low production. If there is reversion to the old order the present day plenty, leisure and comfort with their attendant refinement and culture will disappear. The question of plenty has been already discussed. The yoking of mechanical power to decentralised units of industry can give humanity as much of material goods for the satisfaction of its physical and cultural wants as is good for it. However in some quarters it is held that culture and civilisation advance with increasing human wants. Wants must, therefore, be indefinitely increased. It is argued that satisfied want brings pleasure. Increase of wants would mean more units of pleasure as each successive want is satisfied. Limitation of wants would mean limitation of occasions for pleasure. This would be good mathematics if the happiness of individuals can be reduced to quantitative and measurable terms and if no saturation point was possible. But can happiness be reduced to quantitative measurable terms? Are there no human satisfactions that defy material measurements? Can the dog's pleasure in his bone be in quality the same as an artist's, a scientist's or a scholar's pleasure in his work or the martyr's on the

cross? All these are interesting questions which have to be carefully studied before we can indulge in generalisations based upon partial observations and half truths.

It is also said that avoidance of pleasure is an ascetic doctrine unsuited to the present materialistic age. In all this, it is forgotten that a cultured and civilised life is not the life of desire, indulgence and excitement and the pleasures derived from these. Very often cultured and refined life is the life of comparative self-denial, which brings with it moral and phychic satisfaction. Refined and cultured people, the artists, the scientists, the philosophers, and all those who work for higher ends, are not prone to the pleasures of the body. They live in moderation even when they have the wherewithal to lead a life of multiplied pleasures. Sometimes they live almost ascetic lives. They do not live merely on the physical level. They find that indulgence heavily entails upon the reserves of their physical and psychic energy needed for the discharge of their strenuous self-imposed tasks. Beyond a narrowly variable quantity every pleasure, every indulgence exacts a price in terms of creative activity and the higher life. The ancient Hindus and Greeks were in this respect more psychological and correct. They recognised that only to a limited extent material objects are necessary for a good life. Any increase in them beyond that limit, instead of helping spiritual or cultural life, hampers it. Inordinate hankering after the pleasures of the body weakens the very capacity to enjoy. Psychologically such hankering impairs the intellect and enervates the will. It thus proves to be hindrance rather than a help for any original and creative work. It was also recognized by the ancients that dependence on material objects beyond a particular measure works for the enslavement of the individual who

is placed at the mercy of material goods and insatiable desires and appetites. Such a one cannot be master of himself. He is bound to the wheel of external objects. He cannot rise over them. Refined and cultured life is inconsistent with ever increasing wants and desires. Also too much possession of material goods vulgarises the mind, and is abundantly proved by the life the rich lead. In spite of the veneer of manners the poverty of their souls is apparent to the observant eye. When they have to deal not with their peers but the poor they stand thoroughly exposed. In spite of the plenty that surrounds them they lack real refinement of the spirit.

Modern creation of wants

It is good for humanity that there should be the possibility of supply and satisfaction of all real and necessary wants, that is, of such of them as make for the higher life and not for the enslavement of the individual. But modern big industry instead of regulating production for the satisfaction of real needs, produces goods to create and stimulate new wants and desires. After producing the goods it goes in search of customers. By false propaganda, exaggeration, suppression of facts, which all go by the name of advertisement, fanciful and injurious wants are created. Once created they seek their satisfaction, whatever the consequences. Multiplication of such wants and the capacity to satisfy them is no sign of a living culture. Very often these have heralded decadence. In history ruder people with less wants have supplanted those who lived in ease and luxury. The artificial culture and the intellect of the latter have not saved them from their inevitable fate at the hands of those whom they contemptuously considered as inferior

and as barbarians. It was so with all old kingdoms and empires. Babylon, Egypt, Rome, Greece, the ancient Hindu kingdoms, the Mogul and the Chinese empires, all fared the same fate. Luxury and the capacity to satisfy wants as they arise, have an enervating influence both on the body and the mind. The quick multiplication therefore of material goods for the satisfaction of all sorts of fanciful wants, is not for humanity quite the blessing that it is supposed to be.

Is plenty shared ?

However, the boasted plenty of the capitalist order is not duly shared by the producers and the mass of workers. Their lives are ignorant, brutal, low and miserable. They have become mere wage-slaves, filled with justifiable jealousy and hate. We have examples of rich crops of wheat, coffee and other valuable foodstuffs, which would make millions of homes happy and cheerful, destroyed to keep up prices to a level that will make their sale in the market profitable to the capitalists. This waste can be avoided by more equitable distribution. Centralised production, in spite of big empires and colonies to buttress it, leaves vast portions of populations unemployed. If all this energy that goes to waste is utilised and every hand is provided with work the present level in production of healthy and useful goods can be kept up. We have in an earlier section stated that cottage industry does not exclude the use of mechanical power. It can be yoked to decentralised industry as it is to big industry today. Electric power which can be distributed in regulated units over great areas can bring mechanical power and added efficiency to the door steps of every villager. It can also provide him with as much leisure as he can profitably utilize. All the

material goods, for a good life in an advancing civilization can thus be made available to the generality of the people.

Purchasing Power

One great defect of the capitalist system of production is that while goods are indefinitely increased, the purchasing power of the producers the masses of the people, does not increase The temporary increase in certain countries is due to expanding colonial markets. As soon as these markets disappear and there is competition, wages tend to decrease. If nominal wages are kept up by labour combinations and strikes, the total amount of money paid to the poor as wages is positively diminished. Fewer people are employed with the result that the figures of the unemployed alway keep rising. The purchasing capacity of the masses on the whole decreases. This ultimately adversely affects production. A vicious circle is started creating periodical industrial and financial crisis. Capitalist production is always liable to these periodical upheavals. This state of things is sought to be avoided by planning production. But production cannot be planned, unless distribution, exchange and consumption too are planned. This is what communism tries to do. But its limitations must be recognised. If production and distribution are both planned, in an expanding society, periodical adjustment will always be necessary. In a society so balanced as real communism these periodical adjustments will lead not only these to economic but political revolutions. Moreover, as we have already shown, highly planned production and distribution will make bureaucratic centralisation of power absolutely necessary.

In cottage industry, on the contrary, production and distribution get automatically adjusted. The earn-

ings of the artisan represent the greatest single item of the cost of production. As an artisan's industry expands his purchasing power advances side by side. He is himself the producer, he is also often the consumer. The profits of his labour are not swallowed up by a capitalist, the owner of the instrument of production, leaving him with ever diminished purchasing power. He himself is the chief and principal beneficiary. His purchasing power increases with added output. With this increased purchasing power he fertilises his own industry and thus adds to the sum total of employment. Cottage industry thus provides an automatically adjustible and expanding national planning.

Leisure

We have talked of leisure. The question of leisure has assumed importance under modern conditions. In big factories and offices, situated in thickly populated and congested cities, the work done becomes tedious, tiresome and nerve-racking. It is done under conditions that are physically and psychologically painful and exhausting. Work done under suitable moral and material conditions is always a joy. It has in it an element of play. Therefore, in contrast to the crushing drudgery which is the lot of the mass of people under the capitalist order, leisure appears to be a very great and rare blessing. It has, however, its limitations and even dangers. Leisure to the unrefined and the uncultured is more an evil than a good. Its proper utilization needs a very high intellectual and moral level. If this is not available empty hands become the workshop of the devil. Take the classes who live on unearned incomes, on profits, rents, interest or dividends. Their lives are empty of much good. They are always weary

and discontented with life. They suffer from ennui. The women of upper and middle classes do not know how to engage themselves. They therefore create fanciful jobs. Exciting erotic literature, useless shopping, visits, gossip, empty chatter, club and cards swallow up their time. They suffer often from hysteria and nervous diseases. The majority of the rich scarcely appreciate the fine arts for the enjoyment of which they get great and rare opportunities. They are interested in them more as fashionable pursuits than because they are susceptible to the appeal of the beautiful and the sublime. Instead of deriving any spiritual exaltation from the contemplation of works of art they are satisfied with the pleasure and pride of possession. Most of them collect original and rare-pieces and turn their homes into museums and gallaries more for ostentation and the display of their wealth than from any real aesthetic delight they derive from what they so greedily grasp. When they collect books and create libraries, they do so for the same reason. They suffer from no intellectual curiosity. Most of the books they collect are scarcely opened. The vulgarity of such possessions and collections is scarcely recognised. It goes by the name of patronage of art and learning. The cause of all this waste of money and energy is not far to seek. The wealth of the rich and the leisured classes has outstripped their culture and sensibility. They neither can utilize nor value the leisure which hangs heavy on their hands. They simply manage to kill time, till time kills them. The poor use their hard earned leisure even worse. They use it in poisonous drink and debauch. They use it in coarse, vulgar and animal enjoyments. Humanity in the mass has yet to learn to utilize leisure properly. In fact, the highest mark of culture and refinement is to

know how to utilize leisure profitably and constructively and yet derive joy from it.

The only leisure a good worker needs and asks for is to be allowed to do his job thoroughly and well and for the capacity to do so. Provided the job, he has to do or he is set upon to do, is the one that he has freely chosen or that interests him and engages his particular gifts, a worker needs only so much of leisure as is sufficient to keep him in a fit physical condition. He must have the necessary nourishment and rest to do his work efficiently Often it has been found that if a person has some appropriate work, which suits his ability and inclination instead of availing himself of leisure, he steals time from the necessary hours of bodily recoupment and rest, to do his job or advance the cause for which he works. The capacity to work in such cases is marvellous. The rest that the great men of the world, in any field of activity, be it literature, art, science, politics, war, philanthropy or religion, have given themselves is notoriously small. They have invariably neglected social pleasure and fashionable society. Often they have neglected their personal and family affairs. This is not the case only with intellectual and artistic workers. Even purely physical workers have shown this extraordinary capacity to dispense with leisure when they work for a new scheme in which they are interested or for a cause. As an instance we have the Russian shock workers. They put forth extraordinary physical effort in the knowledge that they are working for a new order which they approve of. They not only work harder and for long hours but they forego even holidays. The capacity of human beings to work is extraordinary. The human body needs very little food, physical comfort or rest. It can do with incredibly small

amount, of these, if it is supplied with psychic energy, which is derived from congenial work and the satisfaction arising from the idea that what is done is well done or done for a cause held dear and sacred. The best of world's work is done almost on a voluntary basis or with very little of payment. In fact, payment has afforded only a minor inducement to creative and original work. It is often difficult to get creative workers, satisfied with their work, to leave their job. The true scientist is loath to leave his laboratory. The artist is reluctant to desert his studio. Even when the conditions of work are hard, exhausting and exasperating, a good worker labours on, oblivious of himself, his comfort and his surroundings. So much is this the case that a religious or a philanthropic reformer would be loath to leave the gutters and slums where his work often obliges him to live. Only uninteresting, uninspiring, forcibly exacted work and work, done under unhygienic moral and physical conditions, needs any considerable amount of leisure, and this too to free itself from the cramping effects of such work. What is then needed is not leisure but an escape from the cramping and suffocating circumstances under which work is done. It is not so much the quantity of work that tires and exhausts, as its nature, its purpose and the surroundings in which it is done. Given proper work under proper physical and psychic conditions, the question of over-work rarely arises.

CHAPTER FOUR

Village Industry and Mass Contact

Organisation may be confined to a few or may embrace the general mass of people. The wider organisation is admittedly better than the narrower one for a democratic revolution. The advocates of the cult of the pistol and the bomb in India recognised the value of organisation and sought to organise themselves. But as their movement was secret, their organisation was narrow and limited. It could not, by the very nature of the movement, expand or grow. In the limited sphere of its activity it called forth the highest suffering and sacrifice and created a close knit association, commanding unquestioning voluntary obedience. But in these days when nations are armed to the teeth and when every citizen, male or female, of fighting age, is a soldier and may be called to colours any day, and every non-combatant is organised for subsidiary war work, a small secret organisation cannot hope to overthrow a powerful modern government. For this purpose a mass organisation is essential. The violent revolutionaries in India have now realised this. They no more hold to their old belief in the bomb, the pistol and terrorist murder. They today believe in mass organisation and mass action. Modern revolutionaries, even when they believe in violence, consider the cult of the bomb and the pistol as counter-revolutionary.

If the masses of a country are to be organised the first thing necessary is contact with them. How best can this be done ? Gandhiji believes that the most effective way of mass contact is through charkha, khadi, village

industry and generally the constructive programme. As against this the Socialist and the communist believe that the best and the only means of this contact are Labour and Kisan movements. Let us examine the two plans.

Revolution and Labour

Labour in India is confined to half a dozen big industrial centres. It covers a population of about 10 to 15 lakhs. These can be organised either purely on their economic demands or on revolutionary bases of class-hatred, class-conflict and class-war. In the former case, there is the genuine trade union movement. In the latter case, there is a revolutionary organisation which may act both in the economic and the political fields. But economic action in this case is merely a means. The main objective is political. Economic grievances only serve as a convenient screen for political action. A conflict with capital may or may not be economically justified or possible but if it serves or is supposed to serve a political purpose, it is organised, encouraged and prolonged. This is considered as a necessary drill or gymnastic for political and revolutionary action. Even if the strike fails it does not matter because the necessary drill has been gone through.

Such political organisation of labour is preferred by those who believe in class-war and violence or those whose faith in non-violence is of the opportunist variety. Gandhiji advocates a genuine trade union movement by which the workers in the factory are organised on the basis of their immediate economic grievances. Genuine trade union movement generally works by means of compromise. It believes that the interests of capital and labour, properly conceived, can within certain limits be reconciled and it seeks to reconcile them by

friendly arbitration and if need be by economic strike. The violent revolutionary labour movement on the other hand is based upon the idea of the fundamental and unreconcilable divergence of the two interests and upon class conflict and war. It, therefore, makes no effort at compromise and good understanding, unless the revolutionary objective is furthered by a temporary truce. Such labour movement foments class conflict and class antagonism at every favourable opportunity because it believes that antagonism is inherent in the situation and no effort must, therefore, be made to diminish it. Rather it must be increased and accentuated. It holds that 19th century trade unionism is an ameliorative movement designed to diminish the revolutionary urge of labour. This postpones the day of the radical re-adjustment of society. It further believes that labour movements, if they are not consciously revolutionary, become ultimately reactionary. They are to be tolerated only if they can be conveniently exploited.

Revolution and the Kisan

The Kisan movement similarly is of a two-fold character. First, the Kisans can be organised on the basis of their genuine economic grievances that need to be immediately removed. Again, these grievances lend themselves to exploitation for political and revolutionary ends. The former mode of organisation makes for the amelioration of kisan conditions by means of compromise and good understanding and if need be by direct action. On the other hand, the revolutionary organisation of the Kisans knows no compromise, beyond an armed peace, which is tolerated for the sake of political strategy or convenience. The revolutionary cry is, all land to the peasants. But even this is meant only as a bait to make

the Kisans to join in revolutionary action. When the Zamindar is effectively liquidated, the land may be nationalised and the Kisan liquidated in turn, as in Russia.

In India, under the present circumstances of foreign domination, the revolutionary and political organisation of labourer and the Kisan, has its natural limits, created by the situation. As long as there is foreign rule, opposition to it will necessarily continue to be the spear-head of our political movement. If, the national political struggle were to include internal strife between the different Indian interests, the situation would get complicated. There would be a triangular fight. The straight issue of national independence would get clouded and confused. This would produce lack of concentration in the national struggle. A situation is created which can be taken advantage of by the foreign holders of power. All those who are united against the foreigner, on the issue of alien rule and national independence would be divided before the objective is achieved. This danger from internal conflict is recognised by the Socialist and the Communist, when they condemn communal divisions and deprecate their exploitation for sectional political ends. They rightly feel that communal conflict would help foreign imperialism. However, they hold that communal differences stand on a different footing. They are artificial because they have no economic bases; not being economic, they are not factual. Economic facts are the only facts. Religion or religious zeal cannot be a fact. It is only a false superstition. The marxists fail to see that as long as a superstition, however absurd exists, moves masses of people and can be exploited, it is a fact, which the practical politician can ignore only at his peril. As a psychologist cannot ignore

the action of hallucination on the psyche and therefore on the body, so a wise politician cannot dismiss ideas held by masses of people as false, simply because they are not based upon concrete economic facts. A belief in ghosts may not be based upon scientific facts but sometimes it plays havoc with human life. So far as it produces important and even tragic results it has got to be studied and tackled. However wrong and misguided communalism may be, those who propose to establish a free India have to face the problem and act wisely and patiently, for, if mishandled, it can be effectively exploited by the third party. We may not give way to it on fundamentals, but we may not ignore it simply because it has no economic basis and is unreasonable and unscientific.*

But even supposing communalism is based on genuine political and economic grievances of some communities, nobody would advocate, for the time being, violent and revolutionary action for their redress. Rather the communal groups and parties would be advised to act with restraint and patience and to find out points of contact and unity and minimise differences and conflict and arrive at some workable compromise and await the final solution, when the third party, that must necessarily profit from internal strife, is eliminated and independence won. There can be only one revolutionary action at a time. Constitutional action can take place on many fronts simultaneously. In the case of labour and capital too the same rule

* After the entry of Russia in the last war the communist in India insists upon the satisfaction of the illusory communal demands of the Muslim League even though such demands are based purely upon religion and have no economic basis. Nay, the communist wants to satisfy these demands even at the expense of economic loss of the masses, whether in India or Pakistan.

must apply. While we cannot allow our labour to be unjustly treated and while we must try to help it in its economic struggle, we have to be careful and see that no irreconcilable conflicts and animosities which may be exploited by the third party, are created. We have, therefore, to strike a middle path, even apart from what our views about class conflict and class war may be. We must recognise that the first and foremost problem in India is national, that is, of the capture of power from foreign hands. Even the possibility of successfully carrying out the socialist plans implies the capture of power by the proletariat first and then anything else. This power to-day is not with the capitalist or Zamindar but with foreign imperialism.

Triangular Fight

There is yet another danger arising out of the political and revolutionary organisation of labour and peasantry under the present political circumstances of India. Government, which is not sympathetic to the masses even when they have genuinely economic grievances, will get a handle and will suppress the most resourceless section of the population, under covert of protecting property rights and maintaining law and order. A general political movement has a universal national appeal. It is not purely sectional or merely economic. It presses in its common service all the divergent and conflicting interests in the country. It appeals to common sentiment of race nationality, history, a common culture and heritage. It appeals above all to the sentiment of honour and idealism of the people. Material interests are no doubt there but the emphasis is always placed on non-material, sentimental, idealistic and spiritual common interests. Revolutionary labour or Kisan action as it is embedded

in the economic needs of particular classes, however large, cannot have a universal national appeal. As a consequence, it is more difficult to break a political national movement than to put down sectional class movements, however extensive the class.

It is also easy and convenient for a government to oppose a political movement indirectly through vested interests. More conveniently can this be done by a foreign government under the plea of affording protection to peaceful citizens and to minorities. A national democratic government cannot take refuge under the pretext of the protection of minorities. The minorities in that case have to be protected, if at all, against the government itself. A foreign government can so manage affairs that the hand that strikes remains unseen. It always prefers to strike through native vested interests, like the capitalist, the Zamindar and the Indian Prince. "Divide and rule" is the oldest imperial maxim to keep the subject population in bondage. Internal sectional struggles as they divide popular sympathies produce civil strife. Every government, however arbitrary, imposes certain restrictions upon its actions. When private individuals or corporations are let loose upon the people, these restrictions are not enforced. During the C. D. movements, the repression from the Zamindars in the Zamindari areas was greater and more brutal. In absence of Government interference opposition to the Zamindar had necessarily to be local. Comparatively weaker units had to bear the brunt of tyranny and oppression. The Zamindar on the other hand had the full support of the Government machinery. In the 1932-34 struggle, it was easy for the Government to fight

behind the Muslim communalists. They stood out against the boycott of British goods and took advantage of it, by diverting trade in the hands of members of their community. The members of the community or communities in sympathy with the Congress had thus to suffer for their nationalist sympathies. Even peaceful hartals and picketing was made the occasion for communal clashes. The Muslim community was worked up against the movement by communal leaders. The boycott of British goods was thus made difficult.

The difficulties placed in the path of civil disobedience to-day on account of the communal policy of the Muslim League are well known. The League attitude complicates the situation. The Congress that can challenge the British imperialism hesitates to challenge the League for that would unleash the forces of civil strife. The Congress is not afraid of the League as the Hindu communalist wrongly suppose. If the Congress can throw a challenge to British Imperialism, with all its resources and its armed might, it is not likely to be cowed down by the Muslim League. But the Congress wants to avoid civil strife which helps foreign imperialism to retain its hold on the country. The quarrel of the League, one would naturally think, should be with the Hindu Mahasabha or the Government. But it quarrels, instead, with the congress, a non-communal body whose object is freedom for the whole of India and not for any section or Community. The League's fight with the Congress may be unreasonable but we have to neutralise or bye-pass it for a successful fight against British imperialism.

A similar difficulty arises when any revolutionary agitation is raised in the Indian States against the

rulers by the Congress. Against a popular movement the princes have all the secret and open support of the Government of India and the latter repudiates all responsibility for the repression indulged in by the princes. In the Rajkot struggle, everybody could see the secret hand of the all-powerful political department of the Government of India. Without its connivance all the unscrupulous cleverness of a Virawalla would have not availed. Therefore it is best for the nation to fight on the clear issue of Independence and direct all its revolutionary strength to one point, that is, against British Imperialism.

It is also a sound policy, that at a time when an all-India movement is started, no minor problems should side-track the main issue. Such side-tracking instead of helping hinders the progress of the fight. Of course genuine economic grievances must be redressed but the struggle for their redress must be strictly confined to purely economic issues. The revolutionary, who fights to overthrow an entire old order of exploitation and slavery, cannot afford to side-track his energies to minor problems. He has got to be patient and tolerate, for less awhile, smaller internal maladjustments. After all the revolutionary must have faith that when independence is achieved these smaller tyrannies will disappear as darkness disappears with the rising sun. Even the sort of provincial autonomy, we recently had, removed some agelong cobwebs. If independence cannot remove the rest, an internal struggle with clear issues can later be inaugurated. Instead, therefore, of fomenting class struggles at present it is best to broadbase the independence movement. This, the Congress, under Gandhiji's leadership, has been progressively doing.

It is however quite possible that internal sectional or class oppression be so great that something must immediately be done. In such hard cases the sectional movements must be narrowly confined to their immediate objectives. Moreover, when the larger national movement is in progress, no unauthorised side action should be taken. All this is fully recognized in armed international conflicts. When nations are at war with each other industrial strikes are put down under special emergency war measures. Generally, the good sense of labour and its patriotism, in face of the common enemy, does not necessitate the use of such measures and labour falls in line with the rest of the population for national defence. But even where labour is not in tune with the war policy of a government, it recognises the limits imposed on its action by the situation. It knows that any extensive industrial direct action at such critical moments of national peril would be misunderstood and generally resented, and the government will have a good opportunity to crush the movement under the pretext that labour action was unpatriotic and helpful to the enemy. In a non-violent national struggle labour has got to be even more careful and restrained because the coercive State machinery is absent. Also in a violent fight the consequences of diverting the main national struggle to side issues are quick and terrible. It is easy to realise them. In a non-violent struggle the consequences of mistaken policy are very often neither so quick nor so disastrous. None the less, wise generalship and disciplined following must take careful note of them.

Industrial strikes, at the time when a non-coperation movement is going on, may not hamper the Government, specially if the Government is foreign, as in India. Before the war almost all the requirements of the

Government of India came from England. Industrial strike does not put such a Government to much inconvenience. Only when a Government, for its every day requirements depends upon local production can industrial strike affect it. This can happen at the time of a total war.

British Allies: the Capitalists

It is, however, contended that imperialism and its allies, the vested interests, must be simultaneously tackled. They depend upon each other. This in the abstract sounds very just and logical. But the counter propositions, that we must fight our enemies one by one and try to isolate them and fight the most powerful first, are equally, if not more, true and wise. Let us, however, see who are these allies of imperialism. Most of them have no love for England. They support the British either from timidity or from self-interest. It is not good policy to alienate by our action those who are not fundamentally opposed to us but who are obliged to lean on the powers that be, because, any contrary course would involve them in sacrifices which they are not prepared to make. In the case of Indian capital it is far from clear if its immediate and ultimate interests are identical with those of foreign imperialism. The latter has often hit hard these interests in favour of the British interest by its tariff, financial, fiscal banking, railway and general policies. The national movement has always helped indigenous industry by creating the Swadeshi spirit. Why is it then that Indian capital is not always sympathetic and helpful? There are two reasons for this. The first is that the financial stake of capital in a struggle for independence is very great. A slight alteration, say in the ratio, can land the business world in utter confusion. It may suffer irreparable losses.

How often has Indian banking and industry been injured for want of timely help, which only a national government could give? Therefore big business is always nervous Then, national awakening strengthens and emboldens the masses. They become conscious of their rights and power. This frightens vested interests. These interests are therefore always vacillating in their allegiance. They want in a way to satisfy both sides, at least not to alienate and antagonise either side. Generally in any big struggle they try to remain neutral. But many individual businessmen, fired with national sentiments and pride, do help. When they cannot do so directly they do it indirectly. Such being the case, any general action against a whole class will be, from the purely prudential point of view, unwise.

Further, capital in India is neither organised nor class-conscious as in Europe. There is a kind of religious hallow round a national movement. Money given to the Congress, to Gandhiji or other leaders for public work, is considered as a kind of charity. So much is this the case that even the avowed enemies of capital, the socialists and the communists are often helped by the commercial classes who have no interest in politics. Everything given in a public cause is considered, in India, as charity and it is held that one may not look very critically at the objectives of those who are the recipients of this charity. At least, so runs the reasoning of the rich in India. Is it, therefore, the path of wisdom to antagonise such non-class-conscious interests against a national struggle? Is it not much better to allow sleeping dogs to rest on for a while?

The Zamindars

The case of Zamindars is a little different. Their existence is bound up with the foreign government. They, therefore, are firmer allies of imperialism. But inherently this class is weak,

helpless and decadent. The Government cannot to-day derive much strength from it. Moreover, the Government is not prepared to see the masses exploited beyond a particular point, by private interests. This point has been over-reached in India. An impoverished peasantry, so far as it is impoverished by the demands of the Zamindars, is a poor and diminishing source of revenue for the increasing expenses of the Government. Also, the shrinking purchasing power of the Indian masses provides a progressively narrowing market for British goods. Therefore, even for British capital, in whose interest the empire is run, the unregulated tyranny of so many Zamindars, each acting in a fanciful and whimsical way, is not desirable. It causes unnecessary discontent. The Government may not for ever find it worthwhile to have such costly and decadent allies. The limits have perhaps been already reached and it is therefore that not many tears are shed over the slow and sure disappearance of the Zamindar. Purely economic causes are also working in this direction. The Congress-Governments did not find much difficulty, from British imperialism, in their land legislation. Neither the Governor nor the Viceroy interfered in spite of their constitutional powers. Even after the resignation of Congress ministries the Governors did not hesitate to perform the last rites to give statutory validity to land legislation passed by Congress governments. In the interests that are maintained to-day, which the British must protect, Zamindari interests are not mentioned. The Zamindars are angry at this. They charge British Imperialism with betrayal of their cause.

The Indian Princes

The case of the Indian princes is in a category apart. They are the creation of the British Government. As a matter of fact they are completely identified with the government. They know that they cannot exist without it. The Government knows that through their (the princes') agency, a third of India is kept in mediæval and feudal conditions. This provides contrasts favourable to foreign rule. The resources of the States are a ready reservoir which can be utilised in times of internal troubles or war emergency. Recruitment of men can be carried on in the Indian States without let or hindrance. Even then, a point may be reached when these decadent and degenerate princes, just like the Zamindars, may prove more a drag than an asset. But this point can be reached only when Britain is obliged or prepared to part with power and not earlier.

The question of the princes is also bound up with the Political Department of the Government of India. This is the most powerful and close corporation in the Government. It is more powerful than the rest of the steel frame. Its power is on a par with that of the Foreign Department of any Government. Even in democratic countries, ministers have come to grief for failing to fall in line with the traditions of the foreign office and for not putting a limit to their reforming zeal. In India a well-meaning Viceroy would burn his fingers badly if he interfered beyond certain narrow limits, with the work of the Political Department. The resources and patronage of the States are at the disposal of this Department. These can be brought into play here and in England. A fleeting Viceroy can be no match to this corporation with a

continuous tradition and unbroken reactionary tradition. A reformer working for the political rights of the States people may not forget these hard facts. If he does, he may come to grief and may not even know wherefrom the blow was struck. Rajkot tragedy is an illustration in point.

Apart from this, there are court intrigues that complicate matters. The Sikar agitation in which some Congressmen allowed themselves to be involved and exploited was revealing. The communal question can also be raised in the State in a worse form than in the India of the provinces. It has already been raised and is being exploited in some of the major Indian States. The State problems therefore will have necessarily to wait for their full and satisfactory solution till the power of British Imperialism is completely shaken. This however does not mean that the States people should be neglected. They should be helped in every way. They should be quietly helped and encouraged in their agitation to secure civil liberties. They should be helped to organise themselves by the working of the constructive programme. In every other way Congress must help except in the starting of civil disobedience. That must be left to the people of the States. Individual Congressmen may join the struggle on their own initiative, but the Congress organisation may not participate in such a struggle. From the difficulties inherent in the situation it would appear that action in these three fields must be cautiously undertaken and carefully regulated.

I have treated these questions at some length, because the socialist and the communist hold that effective mass contact can best be created by the revolutionary

organisation of labour and of the Kisans and of the States people through the Congress.

So far as Indian capitalists and zamindars are concerned we may not forget that in their case we can afford to talk in terms of whole classes as little as we can of whole communities. Whatever may be the number of the members of a community who are unpatriotic, we cannot afford to think and talk in terms of a whole community and condemn it for the action of its individual members. We know that the Muslim League apart from the patronage of the Government, derives its strength from the generality of the Muslim population. Yet we have to make a distinction between the League and the community. We may not dub the whole community as reactionary and unpatriotic. If we do so we shall be doing injustice to large sections of patriotic Muslims, many of whom have kept the flag of the love of the country flying against heavy odds. Some of them have made the highest sacrifices in the cause of freedom. If we condemn the whole community, instead of facilitating the task of such Muslims who are with us, we shall be making their position difficult and awkward. So also many individual capitalists and some zamindars in U. P., Bihar, Bengal and elsewhere, have always helped the political movement purely from national considerations. We shall be legitimately charged with ingratitude if we denounce whole classes. As the communal, so the capital and zamindar problem must, therefore, be cautiously and carefully tackled. We may not allow injustice free field but we may also not confuse internal class injustice with imperial injustice. The national issue must be kept clear. The latter must transcend, for the time being, all internal conflicts. When

an internal conflict has become so menacing and urgent that it may not be neglected and must be immediately tackled, it must be handled with due care and caution, and, in any case, action may not be taken in the name of the Congress.

In this connection we may profitably follow Gandhiji's advice and example. In Champaran he had to organise the Kisans against the tyranny and exploitation of the European planters. Even when Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya and other Congress leaders of the time offered help on behalf of the Congress, he declined to accept it. All that he wanted was Congress sympathy. He has conducted and helped in the conduct of many an industrial and aggrarian dispute. He keeps them severely apart from the main political issue and confines them purely to the economic field. Apart from his desire, as a votary of truth and non-violence, not to exploit a situation for other than avowed ends, purely from the prudential point of view, he considers such exploitation as definitely harmful to the national as well as the particular economic, social or political cause espoused. We may make no secret about our sympathies, we may clearly state the content of the Swaraj that we strive after but we may not allow issues to be confused and the national movement to be repressed under the smoke-screen of sectional, local, communal or class conflicts.

Labour movements; its limitations.

In India to-day there are inherent limitations to our exploiting labour and Kisan troubles for political purposes. Our labouring population bears no proportion to our general population. This population is confined to half a dozen industrial centres. Our cities are not, as in the West, the

nerve centres of our national life, financial, economic, social, political and industrial. In the small highly industrialized European countries, if one or a few nerve centres are captured or disorganised, the whole life of the nation is upset. It is possible in England and France to create a revolution by disorganising life in or by capturing London or Paris. The whole life of England and France is centred in these two great capitals. If by a revolutionary coup these two cities are taken possession of and there is passive sympathy in the country the fall of the rest becomes merely a question of time. In other industrial countries of the west it is likewise. The entire economy can be thrown out of gear by the capture of a few centres of industry, commerce and finance. Even so to overthrow a modern government simply by a labour or Kisan coup appears impossible unless the government is already partially disorganised owing to internal decay or external defeat in war and the army, specially the latter, in rebellion.

In India the industrial population is only a slight fraction of the general population. The national economy is so arranged that no capture or disorganisation of one or half a dozen cities may affect to any appreciable degree the governmental machinery. No doubt there will be some stir, but there will be no disorganisation or collapse. The Indian village, in spite of its modern disintegration, remains, more or less, the same isolated, self-contained and self-sufficient centre of life, if for nothing else than for the very simiplicity of its daily needs and requirements. The army in India cannot be approached directly. All approaches to it are carefully guarded against the political reformer. It can only be reached through the village

which is the home of the soldier and is also the recruiting ground for the army.

A successful revolution in India therefore will have to tackle much more than a few industrial centres. Herein comes the urgency of the organisation of the country-side.

Kisan Movement: its limitations.

The communists and the Kisan Sabhaites hold that the countryside can be politically organised on the lines chalked out by them, that is, on basis of class conflict. According to them, the method employed must be of huge meetings, long marches and monster demonstrations, all directed against the landlords and the zamindars. Wherein comes the foreign government here? The reply is that it does not come directly but indirectly. The zamindars and capitalists are the friends and allies of British imperialism. If they are hit, imperialism is hit. It is forgotten that if labourers and kisans are organised today on class lines they are likely to neglect the national struggle. If we constantly harp upon internal differences, social, economic or communal, the basis and the emphasis of the fight shift. The peasant is already steeped in his narrow everyday problems. To unduly emphasise these and make them the centre of his revolutionary enthusiasm today is scarcely the way to national liberation. The national movement must make men forget for the time being their narrow sectarian, sectional and class grievances and must make them rise to an idealistic and emotional height where personal, communal and class problems are transcended into a higher and more organic conception of society. The national ideal is even today

more real and organic than the class ideal. In spite of the talk of the unity of the proletariat of all the countries and the cry 'workers of the world unite', the fact remains that workers of the world are neither so class-conscious as to forget national prejudices and prepossessions nor are they physically or psychologically united. In actuality, there exists no such entity as the "workers of the world," whose interests even in the economic field are identical. At least the workers do not feel it so. The present war bears out this contention. Are the soldiers in the different countries of Europe fighting for the cause of the workers of the world or are they defending, each group of them, their own national interests and in most cases their respective imperial interests? At critical times of international strife they feel their identity and oneness of interest more with their own nationalists, whatever class they may belong to, than with the proletariat of other, specially enemy nations. 'workers of the world' is, for the present at least, a convenient abstraction which has no place in reality. As an extension of the national idea it is not even a logical extension. The logical extension of the nation is the world state, world nation, or world federation and not an international or world class. These are hard facts which the socialists and communists in India forget more than their comrades in other countries. They therefore perhaps shout the loudest about being factual. Then is it a fact that if the allies of British imperialism are weakened or destroyed, imperialism disappears? Far from it. The Britisher, under certain circumstances, may consent to the elimination of the landlords and even the Indian princes. He would be happy if the Indian capitalists are eliminated from the field of commercial and industrial

competition. All this may not loosen his stranglehold on India which is based upon the military occupation of the country. If he can camouflage this fact, by his alliance with the zamindar, the Indian prince, the communalist and even the capitalist, he would welcome such opportunities. But if need be British Imperialism is prepared to rely upon its naked sword.

The most exploited class

Let us look to other relevant facts of the Indian village. The kisans are not the most suppressed and oppressed section of the population. The most suppressed are the landless labourers who though landless are yet bound to the land and sometimes even change with its ownership. They are literally serfs-the Dublas in Gujerat and the like classes in other provinces. They are the poorest and the most exploited. They are exploited by the small zamindar and the kisan much more than by the big zamindar. I can talk from some personal experience. In the districts of Oudh where for many years my friends of the Gandhi Ashram have been carrying on village work, we had the co-operation of the small zamindar and the kisan in our constructive work. But as soon as we carried the spinning wheel to the landless labourer, attached to the small zamindar and the kisan, we became unpopular and the labourer was threatened with dire consequences by his master, the small zamindar and the kisan, if he plied the charkha. The charkha made him to some extent independent of the small zamindar and the kisan. The latter would not be able to starve the landless labourer if he has other sources of income. It is natural that the small zamindar and the kisan, who themselves work in the field with a few landless labourers, should be greater exploiters than

the big zamindar who does not personally work with them in the field and therefore cannot as effectively exploit them. If one has to live upon the crumbs that fall from the master's table, it is much better to live with one whose table is full and sumptuous. The crumbs falling from an impoverished table are not likely to fill the stomach. This apart from any question of dignity, honour and freedom.

Moreover, except in some parts of U.P. and Bihar, the small zamindar, is financilly, no better than the kisan. Any way if the village poor are to be organised on class basis, we shall have to find out the worst exploited class on whom falls the greatest and most galling weight of tyranny and oppression. When we search for this, we shall realise that there is a heirarchy of oppression and exploitation. When we tackle the kisan problem we have not gone to the very root of the evil. We shall then find that the whole village life and economy needs a thorough overhaul. It is a brand new world that has got to be built. This new and stupendous creation must await, as it had to in Russia, the capture of power. For this, unity of aim and effort is necessary. But we are advised to go the way which would create internal divisions and difficulties in the way of capture of power. Recently in our visits to the villages we observed that the whole talk centred round the kisan-zamindari problem. The national problem had receded to the background. The Kisan-sabha workers, even when they are Congress-men talk more of the tyranny of the zamindar, which is immediately felt in the everyday life of the kisan than of the general, subtle and distant tyranny of foreign imperialism, the indirect ways of the working of which are neither understood by the villager nor by the village

preacher. The imperial tyranny is too distant to be clearly seen, sensed or felt by the poor. It has always to be kept before him as the first and foremost object of his zeal and effort.

The best mass contact under these circumstances, would be that which, without multiplying internal discords, directs attention to the national problem of capture of power from foreign hands.

We have already said that the everyday problems of the labourer and the kisan must not be neglected. Gandhiji has never neglected them. Neither has the Congress, specially after the organisation came under Gandhiji's influence. The question is one of approach. We believe that all schemes for the amelioration of condition of the masses at present should be such as would not imperil the main issue. If the main issue is clouded by sectional issues, not only is the solution of the lesser national problem postponed, but also that of the particular sectional issues. As in the case of States' people if the main cause of Indian Independence is imperilled the cause of the State's people will be jeopardised It is impossible to think of an independent and free peasantry without Swaraj. All internal change for the time being must consequently be of a reformatory and co-operative character. The only revolutionary movement must be the national movement. It is therefore that Gandhiji has advised the Harijan workers not to encourage direct action at present for the removal of the many and galling grievances of the Harijans. In India no sectional problem can be of more pressing urgency. Yet here even we may not resort to direct action For the present, our effort may have to be confined to ameliorative measures and such as would create no

sectional conflicts that will divert attention from the main political issue. It is quite possible that with the advent of Swaraj many sectional disabilities may be removed by the State action of a national Government. In the case of all sectional interests, whether of the kisan labourer or Harijan, all effort at the improvement of their lot should for the present be non-revolutionary. It may appear to be ameliorative in character but in the long run it will have far-reaching effects. All talk about the total elimination of the zamindar and the landlord must cease, not because it is unjust but because under the present circumstances it is likely to injure the wider movement of Swaraj which is also the peasants' movement in a more comprehensive sense. Any revolutionary action here as in labour will only give opportunity to the third party and weaken our national movement.

Silent Change

Charkha, khadi and village industry introduce economic reforms without creating any internal class conflicts. They simultaneously better the lot of the small zamindar, the kisan and the landless and unemployed labourer. They create for political workers an abiding mass contact which goes on from day to day. Kisan meetings, organised by the kisan Sabha workers appear to be very formidable while they last. But they leave nothing permanent behind except itching and bitterness. The constructive worker leaves behind something which is concrete and tangible, which can be measured in so much fruitful work done and wealth produced. While the kisan meetings are only for those who can walk a few miles to a distant village to attend them, the charkha is for all, for male, female, for young

and old. It provides work and organisation. The kisan meetings remove no idleness or unemployment. Charkha and village industry destroy both these. The kisan preacher is not with the masses always. He delivers his speech, makes members and goes his way. Even when the kisans are organised in Sabhas there is not much activity that keeps the members of the Sabhas engaged in a common effort and enterprise through the interval between the meetings. If any effort is made to provide day-to-day co-operative work for the kisans, apart from agitation, it must necessarily be some constructive activity possible in the villages. What is more practical and possible in the present context than village industry? The organiser of these activities comes in periodical, if not in daily, contact with the villagers. He provides continuous work. He provides either goods or wages for the work done. He brings sunshine and cheer in every home. His work is not confined to one season but is spread out in all the seasons. The Kisan Sabha meetings and marches can only be organised in a particular season, summer, which is also the marriage season after the winter crop has been reaped and before the ploughing of the monsoon crop has commenced. If in the sowing and reaping seasons the Kisan Sabha workers were to give the call they will find the attendance at their meetings negligible. The kisans cannot afford to leave their home at a time when they are engaged in the process of providing food for themselves and their family, for the year. The charkha, however, can be taken up by him when he has leisure and at home and makes no demand on his time when he needs it most. It provides him with fruitful, constant day-to-day activity when he has the necessary leisure.

The village worker who is called upon to organise the activities himself gets organisational training. He is not a mere agitator. Agitation cannot keep him constantly engaged. What is he to do to occupy himself with for the rest of the time? If he is not to remain idle and be swallowed in the village lethargy he must find for himself some day-to-day work. When he earnestly searches for such work he will find that khadi, village industry and generally the constructive programme provide him with the most suitable work. It gives him real training for organisation and leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Therefore, in so far as decentralised industry helps to organise national life, create healthy mass contacts, is democratic and socialistic, it has political value and significance. Again, in so far as it discourages imperial ambitions and international conflict it makes a valuable contribution to international peace and good-will. Conceived and worked in the spirit of Gandhiji it helps to bring about a new world order based upon political democracy, economic socialism and world peace. It is therefore that as often as the nation neglects the Constructive programme of which Khadi and Village Industries are the corner stones, so often does Gandhiji insist upon its fulfilment as a necessary condition for any mass action. He has often said that he has nothing better to offer. It is quite possible for India to gain political

independence through industrialisation, crooked diplomacy and armaments; but the results of all that will not be a new World Order but a copy of that which is already suffocating humanity. India, thus freed, will tread the same path of aggression and aggrandisement as those nations in the West and the East that were once slave and are now free. India freed through war and violence will like other nations of the world demand a place under the sun. For a population of 400 millions, and at the rate at which it is increasing, the soil of India will not be enough. Freed by old methods of war and violence it will be led, by the logic of circumstances, to join the competition for earth hunger, as other nations have done. It will search for scientific and defensible frontiers. Every neighbour will a be potential enemy. India under such circumstances will not be the herald of a New World Order based upon democracy, socialism and world peace. It will contribute nothing new to the culture and civilisation of the world. Gandhiji then will have lived and worked in vain. It will be said of him, as of earlier prophets, in this and other lands, that he was centuries ahead of his times and that India and the world were not ready for his revolutionary message of peace and goodwill among individuals, groups and nations. Even then, like other prophets, he will not have lived in vain. But this generation of Indians will have lived and worked for no new objective but for an old idea which solves today no problems, individual or social, national or international.

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